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# THE STORY OF THE ENGLISH TOWNS

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## ST. ALBANS

BY

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# ST. ALBANS

## I. VERULAMIUM

ST. ALBANS may perhaps claim to be the successor to the Celtic town of Verulamium whose site adjoins it on the south-west; and thus it can boast of a history covering some two thousand years. The succession, however, is indirect. The Celtic settlement became the Roman city, after the destruction of which there grew up on its north side the Saxon royal borough of Kingsbury, and that was succeeded by the town of St. Albans laid out on the northern boundary of the abbey precincts.\*

About two centuries before the birth of Christ the south-eastern part of Britain was invaded by tribes from the Belgic parts of Gaul between Paris and the Rhine. The invaders had been in touch with Roman civilization and hence were far in advance of the native races of Britain. They were an agricultural people but had an art which was distinguished by the use of the returning spiral ornament and the manufacture of elegantly shaped cordoned vases which are peculiar to them. One of the principal of these tribes was the Catuvellauni,

\* For the relative positions of these three towns, see the sketch map on the front end-paper of this volume.

wrongly called by Ptolemy the Catyeuchlani, whose territory approximately covered the present counties of Middlesex and Hertford and extended into the counties of Buckingham, Oxford, Bedford, and Northampton. The chief town of their district or canton was Verulamium, where the seat of government was established. The site selected was considered peculiarly safe and inaccessible to enemies on account of the thickly wooded country in which it was situated. The town was further made secure by formidable ditches and banks on all sides except the north-east where the dammed-up waters of the River Ver formed a great artificial lake and swamp. The remains of all these earthwork defences yet survive, and although the lake has been drained, the dam still exists as the causeway from the Abbey Mill to the Verulam Woods, and great banks and ditches to-day mark the limits of the Celtic stronghold. The town covered an area of nearly 200 acres and the fortifications were some two miles in circumference. It was one of the largest cantonal towns in this country. London, which exceeded it in size, was not a cantonal town and probably was not established until after the Roman invasion by Claudius. There was no doubt a primitive track from the Kentish coast to Verulamium which became the Roman Watling Street and was continued north-westward forming for a time the principal highway through Britain.

Like all Celtic races the Catuvellauni were much given to tribal warfare and, about the middle of the first century before Christ, Cassivellaunus their prince made war upon his neighbours the Trinovantes, who dwelt in Essex and whose chief town was Camulodunum or Colchester. The Catuvellauni

were victorious, slew Imanuentius, prince of the Trinovantes, and seized his territory. His son Mandubracius fled to Gaul and invited Cæsar's assistance probably before the first Roman invasion of 55 B.C. Cæsar's second invasion in 54 B.C. brought about a combination of all the Belgic tribes in Britain, and Cassivellaunus, then the most powerful prince in the country, was chosen their chief commander. He was soon however deserted by the other tribes. First the Trinovantes submitted to Cæsar and then five other tribes followed their example. The objective of Julius Cæsar was the chief stronghold of Cassivellaunus, which, there can be little doubt, was Verulamium. Cæsar tells us that on his arrival with his legions at this stronghold about the beginning of August, he found the place of great natural strength and well fortified, nevertheless he proceeded to assault it on two sides. "The enemy stood their ground a short time but could not sustain the onset of our infantry and fled precipitately from another part of the stronghold. A great quantity of cattle was found in the place and many of the garrison were captured as they were trying to escape and were killed." \*

Cassivellaunus was at the time organizing an attack on the Roman naval base, but being deserted by the other tribes, he sued for peace. Cæsar, who was anxious to return to Gaul, retired across the Channel after having arranged for hostages, tribute, and the independence of the Trinovantes.

Cæsar's expedition brought little profit to the Romans for it is doubtful if the tribute was ever

\* Cæsar, de Bello Gallico, V. 21. Translation by T. Rice Holmes in *Cæsar's Commentaries*, 141.

paid. The invasion, however, entirely altered the outlook of the Britons by introducing a more intimate intercourse with Rome and giving to the country the advantages of Roman civilization. It brought into use the Roman methods of building and road-making, and introduced a coinage, and the use of the Roman language and literature. It further set up an export trade in grain and slaves and an import trade of wine, textiles and other commodities.

Cassivellaunus died about 47 B.C. and was succeeded by Tasciovanus, apparently his son, who continued the seat of his government at Verulamium. It is evident he inherited the characteristic energy of his predecessor, for it was during his rule that Verulamium reached perhaps the height of its prosperity. The earliest known inscribed British coins were issued from his mint here and they have been found in such numbers as to imply considerable wealth. Their Latin inscriptions moreover indicate the strong Roman influence at his court. Tasciovanus apparently reigned over fifty years and died about A.D. 5. His son Cunobeline, the Cymbeline of Shakespear's play, removed his seat of government to Camulodunum, and thus Verulamium lost its position as chief town of Southern Britain. For some years before the death of Cunobeline, which occurred about A.D. 41, Britain had not been free from internal dissensions owing to the quarrels among his sons Adminius, Togodumnus, the famous Caractacus and possibly Bericus. Adminius was banished and fled to the mad emperor Caligula whom he tried to persuade to invade Britain. Caligula marched an army to the sea shore opposite Britain and contented himself by telling his soldiers to

gather shells as spoils of the ocean. At the instigation of Bericus, the emperor Claudius in A.D. 43 sent an army under Aulus Plautius to invade Britain, the southern part of which was subdued in that year.

According to their custom the Romans administered the country through the existing Celtic organizations of cantons or tribal areas attached to cantonal towns. Verulamium was the cantonal town of the Catuvellauni and, as has been already shown, was thoroughly Romanized before the Claudian invasion. On this account probably, it was made a 'municipium' about A.D. 49 with special rights of jurisdiction, and was the only town in Britain which obtained this distinction. It was in consequence of its highly Romanized condition that it received so full a vengeance from Boadicea, the fierce but much-wronged Queen of the Iceni, who with her tribesmen in A.D. 60 put the inhabitants to the sword and probably destroyed the town. Under the influence of Agricola, then governor of Britain and later Emperor of Rome, the town was rebuilt about A.D. 80, as is suggested in the *Life of Agricola* by Tacitus, the historian, his son-in-law, and is indicated by excavations to which reference will be made hereafter.

The event for which Verulamium is most generally remembered is the martyrdom of St. Alban, which gives us the first direct evidence of Christianity in Britain although the existence of the faith here nearly a century earlier may probably be inferred. The date of the martyrdom is disputed, but the consensus of opinion is that Alban suffered under the Edict of Diocletian of 303, which may not, however, have reached this country until the following year.



The story is that Alban, a pagan, sheltered a Christian clerk, whose name is given by later writers as Amphibalus, by whom he was converted. In order to save his guest from arrest Alban disguised himself in the cloak of his teacher and surrendered to the city authorities. Being taken before the judge he confessed himself a Christian and refused to sacrifice to the Roman deities. He was therefore condemned to death and after being scourged was led to execution by beheading outside the city of Verulamium. Then there occurred a series of miracles, without which the medieval legends were incomplete. On leaving the town, probably by the north gate, so great a multitude thronged the bridge (possibly near the site of St. Michael's Bridge) that the martyr was unable to pass, but at his prayer the waters of the Ver were parted so that he could pass over dryshod. On seeing this miracle the executioner threw away his sword and refused to carry out his office. Reaching the top of the hill where the abbey now stands Alban desired some water to quench his thirst, whereupon a spring miraculously arose. As the second executioner beheaded the martyr his eyes fell from their sockets. The first executioner was beheaded at the same time and others are said to have suffered martyrdom in other parts of the country. When the persecution ceased, a church was built on the site of Alban's martyrdom and Christianity flourished so well as to foster a heresy. The Pelagian heresy, still disputed in the ninth article of the Thirty-nine Articles, was introduced into Britain about 422 by Agricola, a disciple of Pelagius, a Briton, probably during the lifetime of his teacher. The exponents of the heresy denied the doctrine of original sin and asserted the power

of free will, whereby a man was in himself enabled "to sin or not to sin," thus bringing into question the foundation of the doctrine of grace. To confute this heresy German, Bishop of Auxerre, and Lupus, Bishop of Troyes, were sent to Britain in 429. A disputation was held at which the bishops with great eloquence confounded the Pelagians; and although the site of the disputation is not mentioned, it is evident that it was at Verulamium. After the discussion the bishops, we are told, visited the tomb of St. Alban; where German deposited various relics and carried away some of the earth still, it is asserted, red with the blood of the saint. St. German's association with Verulamium was for long commemorated. A hermitage and chapel were built in the tenth century on the site of the disputation, and a piece of the Roman wall and a farm near by still bear his name.

A more important event attributed to the visit of German and Lupus, was the introduction into this country of monasticism. Before the early part of the fifth century there had been only missionary communities composed of priests and deacons ruled by a bishop. Professor Zimmer places a Celtic bishopric at Verulamium, but there is no evidence of it although it is exceedingly likely that the church built on the site of the martyrdom was the seat of a bishop with a community of priests and deacons attached. Monachism soon spread after its introduction and the monasteries became the centres of ecclesiastical organization and learning.

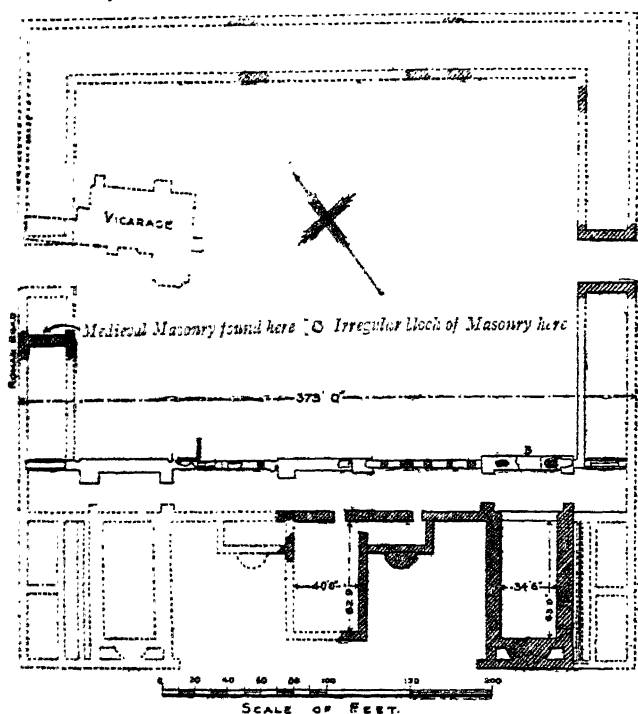
With the weakening of central authority by the withdrawal of the Roman legions in 410, Britain became a prey to disintegrating influences which left it easily accessible to Teutonic invaders. According

to Geoffrey of Monmouth, a most unreliable twelfth-century chronicler, Octa, son of the famous Hengist, and his kinsman Eosa having escaped overseas from a British prison, returned about 494 with an army and laid waste the country. Uther Pendragon, father of the renowned King Arthur, having fallen ill notwithstanding the ministrations of his faithful Merlin, determined to lead his army against the invaders. Being very weak he was carried in a horse litter with the army to Verulamium which Octa had seized. When Octa and Eosa saw the King in such a condition they disdained, they said, to fight with one who was half dead and retired into the city leaving the gates open. The Britons, however, being angered by what they considered Saxon pride, took the town by assault, killing Octa and Eosa. Uther shortly afterwards died at Verulamium from the effects of poison administered by Saxon spies. The story is probably a myth, though from the evidence of coins found on the site, Verulamium was possibly inhabited up to the beginning of the sixth century. Whether it was gradually deserted and fell to decay or was destroyed by some sudden assault of the barbarian, systematic excavation on the site will alone show. The slight explorations hitherto made seem to support the former theory and suggest that the final destruction of the city was the work of the later Saxon abbots.

We know little of the early Celtic stronghold of Verulamium. Evidently from the description given by Cæsar in 55 B.C. the earthwork fortifications were probably much as they were in later times and the fact, as Cæsar states, that large quantities of cattle were stored there would imply there was a considerable amount of open space within the ramparts.

The dwellings were probably of wood or mud and there was no system of street planning. The Romanization of the town after Caesar's second invasion has already been referred to and the excavations undertaken a few years ago show that a building of Roman character had been destroyed to make room for the Roman Forum; it may therefore be inferred that Roman building methods were adopted possibly before the Claudian invasion. The system of Roman town planning with streets running parallel to and crossing one another like a huge chess board was apparently introduced into Britain during the governorship of Agricola about A.D. 80 and was probably adopted at Verulamium after the destruction of the town by Boadicea. From the slight excavations which have been made on the site, it would appear that the houses in the town, as in other Roman towns in Northern Europe, were of two kinds, the one called the corridor type which consisted only of a row of rooms with a corridor running along one side or occasionally on both sides, and the other termed the courtyard type comprising three rows of such rooms with corridors, forming three sides of a square with an open courtyard in the middle. These houses were built of timber and plaster and roofed with red tiles; and were seldom, if ever, carried above the ground story. They had elaborate heating apparatus called hypocausts from which hot air was carried through the walls. Some of the houses were fitted with bathrooms, while the floors were laid with mosaics and the walls decorated with paintings. Such houses were, it is clear, adapted from villa residences in the country and were not well suited to arrangement into the streets of a town.

In the middle of Verulamium, under St. Michael's vicarage and glebe, stood the Forum or market-place, an open gravelled space 308 feet by 205 feet. About the middle was a building, probably the rostrum, and surrounding the open space was a



PLAN OF SUPPOSED FORUM, VERULAMIUM.

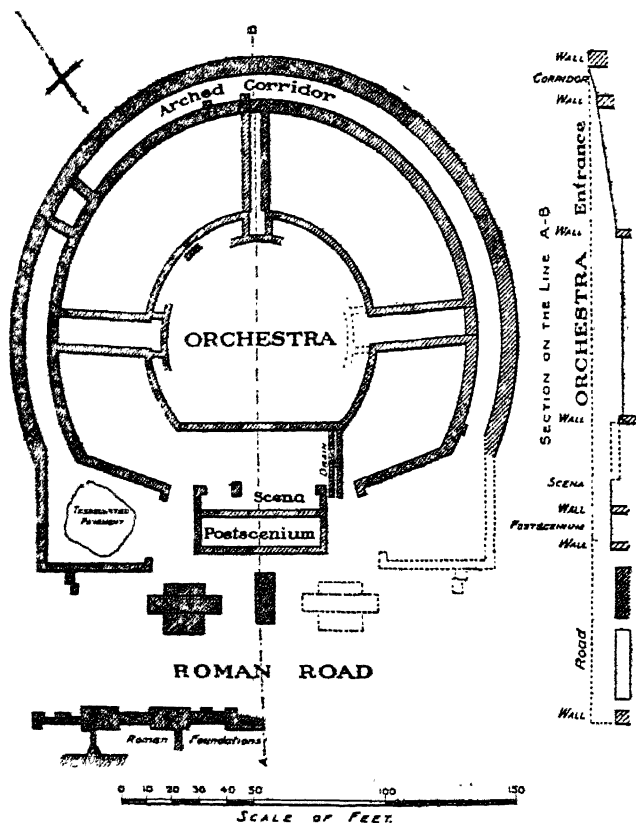
wide corridor paved with coarse tesserae, divided from the open space by a high colonnade with columns over two feet diameter and about twelve feet high. The entrances to the forum were on the north-west and south-east and were apparently arched. On the south-west side outside the corridor was a

series of large chambers, probably courts and temples. One of them measured 63 feet 9 in. by 34 ft. 6 in. with walls 8 ft. 6 in. in thickness which carried a barrel vault. At the south-west end was an apse the floor of which was raised. The walls and vault were painted with a floral design and the floor had a tessellated pavement of a geometric pattern of fine workmanship and of early date for this country. North-east of the forum was another great building, possibly the basilica. These must together have formed a most imposing block.

To the west of these buildings, about 100 yards up the Gorhambury Drive on the south side, stood the theatre, the only Roman theatre discovered in this country. It would accommodate about 2000 persons in tier above tier of seats arranged round an unroofed auditorium comprising about two-thirds of a circle of 190 ft. diameter. The small stage and dressing-rooms were the only parts of the building that were roofed.

The walls of the town were built on the top of the earthen ramparts about the middle of the third century when Pictish invasions were becoming frequent and dangerous to towns boasting of any wealth. The lines of the walls can still be traced and considerable remains of them exist in the Verulam Woods and elsewhere. They are of flint rubble with bonding courses of tiles and vary in thickness from 9 ft. to 13 ft. 6 in. The highest block now standing is 10 ft. but originally the walls must have been considerably higher. The positions of the north, south and east gateways are shown by the causeways still to be traced over the foss, and the west gateway was probably near St. Michael's bridge over the Ver.

By what can be gathered from excavations made on the site, the Roman town of the second



PLAN OF THE ROMAN THEATRE, VERULAMIUM,

*From a plan made by Mr. Grove Low.*

Dark shade denotes solid foundations. Light shade denotes walls only in part laid open or only remains of foundations discovered. Dotted lines are a conjectural restoration.

and third centuries was wealthy and contained

many fine buildings. At some date, however, probably during the invasions of the northern barbarians of the fourth century, the city was destroyed by fire and the buildings lay in ruins for some years before they were restored. Their restoration was carried out in an inefficient manner, clearly indicating that the town had fallen into a state of poverty and decay in the latter part of its existence. The remains of a rude hearth found on the tessellated pavement of the large chamber already referred to, probably belonged to the robber inhabitants mentioned by the Abbey chroniclers.

Some day perhaps systematic excavations will reveal the history of Verulamium during the Roman period and of British Christianity which, so far as we know, first saw light on its site.



## II. THE SAXON PERIOD

WHATEVER may have been the fate of Verulamium, it is clear that when it became deserted all the western part of what is now Hertfordshire must have fallen into a state of anarchy or have become waste land. Bede, however, writing about 731, states that the church erected on the site of St. Alban's martyrdom by the early Christian converts existed in his day and at it 'the cure of sick persons and the frequent working of wonders cease not.' Bede's evidence must be taken with caution as he had no personal knowledge of south Britain, but it shows that the existence of this church had been brought to his notice. It may further be inferred that if, as he writes, it were a place to which miracles were attributed, there must have been some sort of settlement to accommodate pilgrims and sick persons brought to the church to be healed. Some sixty years later the fame of the miracles performed at this early church reached the ears of Offa, king of the Mercians, whose friendship with Charlemagne had inspired him with the desire to establish more monasteries in this country. As all churches at this date were served by communities of priests, it may be that Offa's foundation of St. Albans Abbey was only

an enlargement and enrichment of an existing community of priests long established on the spot, perhaps going back even to the time when the early Christians built the church, after the martyrdom of the saint.

The legend of the foundation of St. Albans Abbey is told us by the Abbey chroniclers. When Ethelbert or Albert, king of the East Saxons, came to the court of Offa to woo the hand of his third daughter Elfreda, Offa's queen Cynethryth or Quendreda became jealous of his popularity and tried to persuade Offa to slay him. Offa indignantly refused, so the queen took the matter into her own hands. She had a pit prepared under a room in her palace and inviting Ethelbert to meet her daughter, bade him sit down to await her arrival. The seat gave way and he fell into the pit where he was murdered by guards stationed there for the purpose. Offa, a brave and upright ruler who by valour of arms had extended his kingdom from the dyke named after him in the west to the sea on the east, was seized with remorse for his wife's treachery and determined to found a monastery in atonement for her crime. While at Bath in 793 he had a vision in which an angel admonished him to raise the body of St. Alban, protomartyr of the Britons, and place it in a more worthy shrine. He revealed his dream to Humbert or Higbert, Archbishop of the newly established Mercian archbishopric of Lichfield, whereupon Humbert, accompanied by the Bishops of Lindsey and Leicester, set out for Verulamium where he was joined by Offa. Having collected a great multitude 'of both sexes and divers ages,' they went in search of the body of the saint, whose place of burial had long been forgotten. Being unsuccessful

in their search the King was eventually guided to a spot by a ray of light where, on digging, the body was found together with the relics of other saints deposited there by St. German. With great rejoicing Humbert and the other bishops raised all the relics and carried them in procession with hymns and shouts of praise to the church erected on the site of the martyrdom. Here Offa and his son Egfrith built the monastery and endowed it with a great tract of unreclaimed forest land. The little church built by the British converts is said to have been incorporated in the new buildings and may have remained until the abbey was rebuilt by the first Norman abbot.

The early history of the abbey is obscure, as our knowledge is drawn from thirteenth-century monastic writers who looked with abhorrence upon the secular lives of the Saxon monks. It would appear, however, that St. Albans was a wealthy house and distinctly aristocratic, no one we are told being admitted as a member who was not well born and many of the monks were kinsmen of the reigning monarchs. It was what is termed a double monastery comprising both men and women, the latter living in a house in the almonry and attending separate services in the church. In this wild forest district, infested no doubt by robbers and with evil-disposed persons lurking in the ruins of the Roman city, the monastery and those it attracted for the supply of its needs, required protection and the maintenance of law and order. Hence it was that a strongly fortified town or castle, as such a fortified enclosure was then called, was established for the protection of the monastery between the abbey precincts and Verulamium, possibly by Offa. The earthworks of this enclosure, to which the name of Kingsbury was

given,\* can still be traced and are bounded by Fishpool Street, Branch Road, the Verulam Road and New England Fields. Its defences were formed, not in the usual way by digging a ditch and forming a bank with the soil excavated, but by levelling the top of a natural hill and throwing the soil outwards so as to form an abrupt rampart which was further defended by palisades. There was evidence of only one original entrance, at Prospect Road towards the abbey, which has lately been obliterated by buildings. Projecting on the south-east corner towards the abbey was a bulwark or *propugnaculum*, as the chroniclers called it. This extra defence and the entrance, both on the abbey side, tend further to show that the castle was built in relation to the abbey. Here in the royal town was kept a body of king's officers who maintained the King's peace and possibly collected the revenue throughout the neighbourhood, and here probably were held some minor courts of justice. The inhabitants, who lived in houses of wattle and daub, were principally engaged in fishing in the great lake already mentioned on the north side of Verulamium. A council held at Kingsbury in the time of Ethelwulf (828-58) is said to have taken place at this town but the identification is by no means certain.

The middle of the tenth century was a period of great progress and organization throughout the country, consequent on the trading activities of the Danes. Market towns were established, coinage reintroduced, and religious institutions were being reorganized under the reforming hands of St. Dunstan

\* See sketch map on the front end-paper of volume. Kingsbury at Aylesbury and at Wilton both lie in the midst of church lands.

and St. Oswald. The effect of these developments was fully felt at St. Albans. Although there may have been a few scattered dwellings for the accommodation of pilgrims and others visiting the Abbey in the eighth and ninth centuries the present town of St. Albans owes its foundation to Abbot Wulsin about 950. It is interesting to notice that we have at St. Albans the plan of a small market town of the tenth century. The Abbot first laid out the market place in the shape of an elongated V on the north side of the Abbey precincts and in tracing the area of this market place it must be borne in mind that the shops, courts and buildings now standing between the east side of Chequer Street and the west side of French Row are encroachments.\* By the process of leasing the sites of the market stalls, permanent structures began, in the fourteenth century, to take the place of the temporary stalls; and so the southern or most important part of the market place was built over and the curious network of courts, rows and alleys arose. Having laid out the market place the abbot divided the frontage to it into convenient lengths and marked out plots of land which ran back to the borough boundary. He then attracted people from the neighbourhood to settle on these plots and assisted them with grants of money and materials to build themselves houses. This development can be traced in most of the small market towns of this country and was the plan most frequently adopted down to the fifteenth century.

Originally the lands of St. Albans probably formed one large parish served by the monks of the abbey church. Abbot Wulsin apparently divided

\* See sketch map on the front end-paper of this volume.

this great territory into three sokes or jurisdictional areas and built a church, dependent on the abbey, for each soke, namely: St. Peters at the north, St. Michaels at the west and St. Stephens at the south-east entrance to the town. The new market town of St. Albans could not fail to be a serious rival to the royal fortified borough of Kingsbury, and the ancient jurisdiction of the king's officers on the other hand interfered with the jurisdiction of the abbey. The abbot, therefore, bought Kingsbury from the Crown, drove out its inhabitants and levelled its fortifications, except the bulwark near the abbey, the destruction of which King Cnut would not permit as he wished to retain the authority of his officers who were entrusted with the maintenance of the king's peace throughout the district. At the same time the great lake or fishpool was purchased by the abbey and drained by piercing the dam or causeway on its east side at a spot which can still be identified. The only remains of the lake now surviving are the fishpond in the grounds of St. Michaels Manor. The draining of the fishpool had the disadvantage of laying the town of St. Albans open to all the disreputable characters including, it is said, a dragon, that frequented the ruins of Verulamium, and consequently it became necessary for the abbey in 1006 to buy from the Crown the site of the Roman city and to drive out these undesirable neighbours there. Thus the buildings of Verulamium were levelled and the site became a valuable quarry of bricks and stone for the rebuilding of the abbey which was then contemplated. Great stores of material were in this way collected.

The religious reforms which ran concurrently with the economic developments of the tenth century

are equally traceable at St. Albans. The English monasteries at this time were filled with secular canons some of whom were married and dwelt with their wives and families in the religious houses. They did not live in common nor did they observe the other rules of the Benedictine Order. With a view of removing these irregularities Dunstan, Ethelwold, Oswald and others made strenuous efforts to enforce the Benedictine rule in the middle of the tenth century. We learn that while St. Oswald was bishop of Worcester he desired more room for the monks he had collected and about 967 was offered by King Edgar, who was fully in sympathy with the party of reform, the choice of the monasteries of St. Albans, Ely or Benfleet in Essex. Instead of accepting any of these houses Oswald founded the monastery of Ramsey. Nevertheless he did not lose the opportunity of replacing the secular clerks by regular monks at the monasteries offered him and made Ælfric, who was the son of an ealdorman of Kent, abbot of St. Albans. Ælfric had been chancellor to King Ethelred before he became a monk at Abingdon under Ethelwold, and was a personal friend of Dunstan, whose Life is dedicated to him. He was made bishop of Ramsbury in 990 and archbishop of Canterbury in 995. There can be little doubt that during his time the abbey was reformed and the Benedictine rule fully adopted, although we learn little on the subject from the abbey chronicles.

The wealth of St. Albans Abbey was increased by gifts and grants of land, largely by the benevolence of rich Danes who settled around it in the Hundred of Dacorum or Hundred of the Danes. The last Saxon abbot, Frederick, a kinsman of Cnut, was

appointed by Harold and owing to his influence and the aristocratic and intensely English tendencies of the house, it fell under William's suspicion. On one occasion; it is said that when William taunted the English with being so easily conquered Frederick retorted that the King really owed his easy conquest to the Church which held so much of the land of the country. William replied if that was the case he would not be safe from an attack of the King of Denmark or any other enemy. 'Therefore,' he said, 'out of your own mouth I judge you, and I begin with you and shall resume the possessions with which you have been so abundantly supplied, that knights may be provided from them for the defence of the kingdom.' Thereupon the King seized all the lands of the abbey from Barnet to London. Whatever truth there may be in the story, it is a fact that at this time the abbey lost much land in Middlesex which it never regained. Abbot Frederick became involved in the rebellion of Earl Waltheof and in 1077 fled to Ely where after a few days he fell ill and died.



### III. THE NORMAN CONQUEST

THE full effect of the Norman Conquest was soon to be felt at St. Albans. After the flight and death of Abbot Frederick, the abbacy was given to Paul, a monk of Caen and a kinsman of Archbishop Lanfranc, who, as the chronicler states, is said by some to have been his father. Paul became abbot in 1077 and immediately began the rebuilding of the abbey from the materials collected by the Saxon abbots. The new church was dedicated in 1115 with great ceremony in the presence of Henry I. and Queen Matilda. Abbot Paul had the supremest contempt for all things Saxon, and destroyed even the tombs of his predecessors the former abbots. No doubt, from his point of view, the Saxon monks were grossly lax in their religious observances. He therefore insisted upon the strictest discipline. He established customs which were approved by Lanfranc whereby St. Albans became a school of religion and an example of religious observance throughout England.

Under the able and strict rule of the early Norman abbots of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the abbey reached the height of its wealth and glory. It acquired privilege after privilege, not always, it must be confessed, by means which would commend

themselves to modern ideas but such as were recognized as legitimate at the time, and the power which these privileges gave, undoubtedly brought fame to the house. The most important of them were granted by Nicholas Brakespear, who under the name of Adrian IV. was the only pope of English nationality. He was born at Brakespears, a farm still bearing this name in Abbots Langley parish. His father became a monk at St. Albans Abbey and he himself applied for admission but was refused for lack of learning. He bore no malice, however, for his rejection and after his election as pope in 1154 he gave the abbots of St. Albans the right to wear a mitre, exempted them from the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Lincoln in whose diocese the monastery lay, and confirmed them in the position of premier abbots in England. On Easter Day, 1163, the abbot with great pride and ceremony celebrated mass for the first time with mitre, ring and gloves and in the same year took the first seat among the English abbots at the Council of Tours.

The great wealth of the Abbey enabled it to foster within its house all the principal arts. The sacrists at this time were almost invariably master workmen of some note and as was usual at the time practised many arts. In this way there grew up in the abbey well-recognized schools of art for goldsmiths and other metal workers, for mural and miniature painting and writing. Thus a beautiful shrine is said to have been made for the relics of St. Alban in the twelfth century by Anketil, a monk of the abbey who had been goldsmith to the King of Denmark. He was assisted by a pupil, Solomon of Ely, and Master John the goldsmith whose son Nicholas was keeper of the mint, first to the King of

Denmark and then to the King of England. Master Baldwin the sacrist, a celebrated goldsmith, in 1186 made a marvellous gold chalice and some vessels presented to the abbey by Henry II. Master Walter de Colchester, a famous painter, was sacrist in 1213 and executed many of the mural paintings in the abbey church, in which he was assisted by other inmates of the monastery. So distinguished was he in his time that he was called in to design and, with the assistance of Elias de Derham, to make the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury Cathedral; which was completed in 1220. King Henry III. was so much struck with the work of the St. Albans school that in 1249 he ordered Master John de St. Omer to make a lectern for the new chapter house at Westminster like that at St. Albans, or more beautiful if it could be made. The work must have been of a very elaborate character for it took from a hundred to a hundred and fifty workmen, including stone masons, marble workers, carpenters, painters, smiths, glass workers, and plumbers working at St. Albans for over a year to complete it.

The school of history and literature became even more celebrated than that of the arts. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries every important monastery had its scriptorium for the copying of books, and Abbot Paul de Caen, the first Norman abbot at St. Albans (1077-1093) made a very liberal provision for this office which was increased by later abbots. The books issued from this scriptorium, many of which still exist, are marvellous specimens of handwriting and illuminating. Out of the scriptorium grew the greatest school of medieval historians produced in England. Abbot Simon, who died in 1183, ordered that the House should



ST. ALBANS ABBEY: NORTH SIDE OF NAVE  
SHOWING MEDIEVAL PAINTINGS



always appoint a historiographer, but the first historian of this school who can be identified was John de Cella, abbot from 1195 to 1214, who besides his literary tastes was no mean artist and scholar. He was followed by Roger of Wendover, author of *Flores Historiarum* and other works, who died in 1236, and he by Matthew Paris, the most celebrated perhaps of all English chroniclers. Paris, who became a monk of St. Albans about 1217, was not merely a chronicler copying from previous writers but obtained much of the information contained in his works direct from the actors in the events he records. He was a courtier and diplomatist and a favourite with Henry III. who supplied many details to be found in the chronicles, and with Pope Innocent IV. who no doubt gave him particulars of foreign events. He continued the work of his predecessors in the *Historia Major* and himself wrote the *Historia Minor*, *Vitæ duorum Offarum* and the *Vitæ Abbatum S. Albani*. He was a patriotic Englishman and extraordinarily unbiassed for his time. He died about 1249.

Other monks who maintained the reputation of the history school at St. Albans, though they did not attain to such a high standard of work as Paris, were William Rishanger who wrote various histories of the Barons' Wars in the reign of Edward I. and died about 1312, John de Trokelowe and Henry de Blanford, who carried the history down to the later Edwards, and an unknown monk who continued the work to the end of the fourteenth century. After them we have Thomas Walsingham, the last of the great medieval chroniclers of the St. Albans school. He was for a time Prior of Wymondham, a cell of the abbey, but he could not tear himself away from

the scriptorium at St. Albans and returned to end his days there and to complete his work known as the *Chronicon Angliæ*.

Prosperity brought its responsibilities to the abbey, which from time to time had to give hospitality to the reigning sovereigns, the nobility and others. For a time the monastery had to entertain the haughty empress Matilda, who after the defeat of Stephen at Lincoln in 1141 was elected queen at Winchester. In her progress to London to be crowned, which occupied several weeks, she stayed at St. Albans. At her arrival she was met by a procession from the abbey and received with great rejoicing. Here she arranged the terms upon which she should be received by the citizens of London and then proceeded in state to Westminster. Matilda's tactless behaviour alienated the citizens and a contest ensued between her and Stephen's Queen Matilda which eventually ended in the flight of the Empress and the recall of Stephen.

About September, 1143, Stephen held his court at St. Albans, at which all the principal nobles were present. A quarrel arose as to the conduct of the powerful Geoffrey de Mandeville, Earl of Essex, and the King accused him of treason. Geoffrey scornfully laughed at the accusation and defied the King who ordered his arrest. The earl and his followers resisted and a tumult ensued. As the King's action was a gross infringement of the abbey's rights of sanctuary which he had sworn to maintain, the knights of St. Alban, who had their quarters in the abbey precincts as at other great monasteries, interfered to keep order. In the conflict, Walchelin de Oxhay, one of the knights of the abbey, unhorsed the Earl of Arundel who was nearly drowned in the

Ver at the bottom of Holywell Hill. Earl Warren, William de Ypres, and others of the King's lawless retinue, were so incensed at this that they threatened to burn down the town, and the abbot to appease their wrath had to melt down a great tabula of gold and silver set with gems belonging to the abbey church and give them the proceeds.

On a later occasion Stephen again visited St. Albans, when the abbot, taking him to the altar of St. Stephen to hear mass, placed the shrine of St. Alban at his feet; then prostrating himself before the King and his magnates, he prayed that for the love of God and the martyr the remains of Kingsbury might be destroyed as they harboured thieves and were a thorn in the eye of the abbey. The King acceded to the abbot's prayer, and the last remains of the royal town were demolished and the ground ploughed and sown.

The lawlessness of the "anarchy" of Stephen's reign was re-enacted in the time of the Barons' Wars at the beginning of the thirteenth century. During the year of the Interdict (1208) large sums were extorted from the abbey and town by Louis and the barons. It was hoped, however, that wrongs such as these would be redressed and on 4 August, 1213, Geoffrey Fitz Piers, the justiciar, at a council held at St. Albans announced that the good laws of Henry I. would henceforth be kept and all injustices swept away. Unfortunately his death prevented the fulfilment of his promise in the King's name. This council, ostensibly called to assess the losses of the Church during the Interdict, had a much wider political aspect. It was, as Bishop Stubbs considers, the first occasion, so far as is known, that representatives were summoned to a national council and



was thus a step towards the institution of a representative parliament.\* The state of anarchy continued and St. Albans was again the scene of violent disturbances in 1217 when the followers of Fawkes de Bréauté 'a man without bowels of compassion,' as the chronicler calls him, sacked the town, killed one of the burgesses in the abbey church and robbed and carried away many others in chains to their castles where they perpetrated the most unheard-of cruelties on their prisoners, so that on all sides there were 'moans, wailings and complaints.'

As the century advanced law and order were established throughout the country. Towards the end of the thirteenth century St. Albans participated in one of the most striking pageants which has been witnessed in England. Eleanor, Queen of Edward I., died at Hardeby near Lincoln on 28 November, 1290, and her devoted husband determined to have her body carried in a great funeral procession from Lincoln to Westminster. The procession, accompanied by the King, started about 4 December and came by way of Northampton and Dunstable along Watling Street to St. Albans where it arrived on 13 December. On approaching the town the whole convent, solemnly vested in their copes, went out to meet the body at St. Michaels and escorted it to the abbey church. Here it was placed before the high altar and vigil and services were held through

\* This council has evoked a good deal of comment. See Stubbs, *Constitutional Hist.*, I. 565-6; *Political Hist. of England* (Longmans) 1066-1216, p. 427; *English Hist. Rev.* (article by A. W. C. Davis) XX., 289. Pope Innocent III. called an assembly of bishops and clergy at St. Albans in 1207 but it was forbidden by King John, and in 1261 an assembly of knights was summoned to St. Albans, but the place of the meeting was altered to Windsor.

the night. The King seems to have left the procession at St. Albans and travelled direct to London, but the body was carried by way of the royal monastery of Waltham through London to Charing Cross and finally to Westminster Abbey. The cross which was erected in memory of the occasion as the market cross has played an important part in most of the events with which St. Albans has been associated. It was the meeting place of the inhabitants, the place where proclamations were made, and adjoining it the hustings were erected. We know little of its design but it probably resembled the crosses built by the King at the other resting places of the Queen's body. The main part of the structure was executed by John de la Bataille who acted as architect and mason, the statues being supplied apparently by William de Ireland and Alexander le Imaginator. It was completed before 1294 and stood as the market cross until 1703 when, having become dilapidated, it was unfortunately removed.

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The principal trade at St. Albans at this time was in cloth. In 1202 King John confirmed to the men of the borough the right to buy and sell their cloth as they had had in the time of Henry II. This confirmation carries back the cloth industry to the middle of the twelfth century, when there was a long vacancy during which the townsmen would have dealt directly with the King and not with the abbey authorities. For some hundred years the trade prospered. We find references to many weavers, fullers and dyers during that time; to Fuller Street where there was a tenterground for stretching cloth and to the abbot's fulling mill on the Ver below Eywood on the east of Holywell Hill. The traders at St. Albans appear to have been both cloth makers and wool dealers. They probably purchased the wool in the district during the shearing time and stored it in the town to be made into cloth which was sold retail to their neighbours or wholesale to the London buyers.

The interests of the abbey and the town were one until the thirteenth century. The abbey, to save the town from being sacked or from suffering famine, on more than one occasion sold its treasures, while wealthy townsmen came to the assistance of the abbey with gifts and loans when it was in pecuniary straits. Evil influences, however, arose in the thirteenth century which disturbed these happy relations.

#### IV. THE PEASANTS' REVOLT

THE early prosperity of St. Albans abbey was reflected upon the town. In 1086 we learn from the Domesday Survey the town comprised forty-six burgesses, four Frenchmen possibly brought there by Paul de Caen the first Norman abbot, sixteen villein tenants and thirteen bordars. These composed the inhabitants of a medium-sized agricultural town, the burgesses and Frenchmen representing the trading community and the villeins and bordars the agricultural. The needs of the abbey with its ceaseless stream of visitors, its great concourse of pilgrims and its activities as a centre of literature, art and industry, brought wealth to the town and traffic to its market. Besides which the town was the first stage out of London for passengers and goods passing to and from the Midlands and the North. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries burgesses of St. Albans are found rich and prosperous in London and other parts of England, and even in France. Henry of St. Albans, Sheriff of London in 1206, was one of the wealthiest citizens of London in the early part of the thirteenth century, Master Robert of St. Albans was Henry the third's physician, Lawrence of St. Albans was a justice of the Forest, while Adam de Nedham and other merchants of

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The abbot, as lord of the town, had obtained from Henry II. (1154-89) a confirmation of his rights in St. Albans with the market place and every liberty a borough ought to have ; privileges which were equally beneficial to the abbot and townsmen. But the town desired a freedom to which the abbey would not listen. The first attempt of the townsmen to assert their independence was perhaps when they obtained in 1202 the licence already referred to, direct from the Crown and not through their lord. This was in the abbacy of Abbot John de Cella whose somewhat weak rule was the cause of other difficulties. The next step in the same direction was during the time of the litigious abbot John de Hertford. The townsmen in 1253, taking advantage of questions raised by the Queen acting in the King's absence, procured a charter of exemption from pleading to a writ of attaint of any tenement in the town such as was the practice in other boroughs. The effect of this charter was to deny the right of appeal from the borough court to the hundred court. Hitherto there had only been the abbot's court in the town held on St. Margaret's day before the abbot's reeve which dealt with matters of the court leet such as the assize of bread and ale, the election of constable and two chief pledges for each of the four wards into which the town was divided. For the trial of suits and crimes the townsmen had had to go to the hundred court of the abbot's liberty, which was held like all early hundred courts in the open under the great ash tree in the courtyard of the abbey. It was the ambition of every town to have its own court, which meant the management of its own affairs, the collection of rates, the policing and the enforcement

of sanitary and other regulations. The establishment of such a court was the object of the townsmen in procuring their charter of 1253. Shortly after this date (between 1270 and 1284) the reeve of the town gave place to a bailiff, a change which usually indicates an increase of jurisdiction, and in this case apparently the establishment of a court which took over such part of the jurisdiction of the hundred court of the liberty as related to the town.

It was this charter, granted direct to "the good men" of St. Albans and not to their lord, the abbot, which was one of the chief causes of the disputes between the town and abbey. It implied the existence of a borough court, and consequently carried uncertain privileges of local self-government. At least this was the view taken by the townsmen who in the eyre of the justices of 1262 complained that the abbot had put the freemen of the town to an oath without royal warrant, thus denying their free status, and had compelled them to attend the hundred court against the customs and liberties of the town, thus ignoring their borough court.

The spirit of rebellion at St. Albans which arose at this time was neither local nor temporary. Similar difficulties were experienced at Bury St. Edmunds, Wells, and other towns which had grown up under the shadow of monasteries. In northern Europe the desire of all towns for freedom and independence, so necessary for the prosecution of all trade, had led to the establishment of communes. The bishops and abbots of Flanders and France, in the same manner as the abbot of St. Albans, treated the men of their towns as villein tenants subject to all the inconveniences and drawbacks to trade of base tenure. Communes were sworn confederacies

of townsmen bound by oath to throw off the heavy yoke of their lords and to use every means to do so. The symbol of their confederation was the town 'beffroi,' the belfry or clock tower, whose bell was rung to assemble the people for the protection of their lives, liberties, and properties. There can be little doubt that the English ecclesiastical lords, fearing a repetition of the excesses against authority which had been committed abroad, began to hold a tight hand over their tenants and suppressed any attempt at independence. London had adopted the commune in 1191, and St. Albans was in close touch with London then and later, so that it is not surprising if the commune existed then or in the early part of the thirteenth century, and its existence at a later date is proved by proceedings against the town in 1331. These proceedings show that for a long time previously some 160 townsmen had bound themselves by oath to maintain, prosecute, and defend the quarrel of any one of them, either just or unjust, although they should thereby risk their lives, or suffer damage, or death itself. They had their common chest and levied a rate on the townsmen and some of them declared that they so gloried in the name of the commune that they thought no name more honourable, and they considered that there should be no lord but the King and commons. It was against this sworn confederacy that the abbots fought. The disputes about millstones and fulling mills were merely the outward signs of a far more serious question. The clock tower, or beffroi, at St. Albans, the emblem of the commune, is probably the sole surviving example of such a tower in this country. Although not built until the early part of the fifteenth



century it was erected by the gild which, as will be shown, was the successor of the commune.

But to return to the chronological order of events. The disputes between the abbey and town were brought to a crisis in 1274, when the chronicler of the abbey records that while the monastery groaned under the heavy weight of poverty the men of the town, as an ungovernable people, rose against the abbey and in contempt of the church fulfilled their gross and coarse cloths and ground their corn where they willed, and used hand-mills in their houses. The townsmen claimed these rights as free burgesses and organized themselves into what we should now call a corporation. They elected officers and levied a rate upon rich and poor in order to be prepared with the necessary means to contest the abbot's opposition when the appropriate time should arrive. The abbot and convent in despair invoked the aid of St. Alban and held a great service of intercession, the monks going in procession with bare feet before the high altar chanting the seven penitential psalms.

It was not perhaps a coincidence that these disturbances occurred at the time King Edward I. was inciting the commune of Limoges to resist their lord, Margaret the Viscountess. The men of St. Albans probably argued that their alleged rights could not be opposed while the King was supporting similar claims elsewhere.

In the meantime Queen Eleanor, in passing through St. Albans, was brought to the abbey by a private way to avoid the importunities of the discontented townspeople, but the women of the town obtained access to her, and with imploring hands and tears in their eyes cried to her, 'Lady, have mercy

on us; we cannot live on account of the Abbot. His servants slander us injuriously, and commit rapine upon us. Aye! they make you go out of your way lest by chance our grievance may be shown to you.' The petition which they presented to the Queen is still extant at the Public Record Office.

Later Michael, son of Richard Bryd, and Henry de Porta, two of the wealthier townsmen, brought an action against the abbot for sending his bailiff with his white rod of office to search their houses for millstones and for taking distraint from Henry for fulling his cloth in his own house and not at the abbot's fulling mills. But the suit failed and unfortunately for the complainants it was shown that Henry had at one time been farmer of the abbot's fulling mills and during the term of his lease when any one had fulled his cloth elsewhere than at the abbot's mill he had distrained him.

From generation to generation the matter of fulling and grinding corn was never allowed to rest. Sometimes the townsmen who transgressed the law were merely fined and at others they were excommunicated, but still they persisted. With the reign of Edward II. the question became political. The abbey, always aristocratic, took the part of the King and his favourites, while the townsmen, joining with London, supported the Queen with the Earl of Lancaster and the commons. Abbot Hugh's assistance to the King and his unpopular favourites the Despencers caused the barons to occupy the town for three days in 1322, when they threatened to spoil the abbey.

The townsmen took every advantage that was to be had from the disturbed condition of the country towards the close of the reign of Edward II. They

had strengthened their cause by obtaining in 1316 a confirmation of the much-disputed charter of 1253. Their opportunity came at the end of 1326, when their friends in London, by supporting the party of the Queen and the Mortimers, had brought about the deposition of Edward II., which gave them the key to the political situation by placing Edward III. on the throne. The townsmen of St. Albans now felt sure of their position. Insubordination had begun to show itself early in 1327, and the abbot proposed to appeal to the Earl of Lancaster who was passing through the town with an armed force but desisted at the earnest request of the elders. Immediately the Earl had left, the townsmen, 'devoid of all gratitude,' as the chronicler puts it, caused a riot by tendering an oath to one of the abbot's servants and in the scuffle a man was killed and the servant wounded. As a warning to others who might show themselves unfavourable, the townsmen set up in the Market Place a headsmen's block with an axe attached.

On the following day the twelve elders of the town in the name of the community demanded from the abbot a charter of liberties of a free borough, which they claimed to have had until the abbot and his predecessors impeded them. Their claims are peculiarly interesting, as they indicate what privileges were then considered essential to a borough. They asserted the right to send two burgesses to Parliament, to answer the justices itinerant and all inquisitions and pleas by twelve burgesses without mixing with foreigners or those outside the borough, to keep the assize of bread and ale by twelve burgesses, to have rights of common in the lands, woods, waters and fisheries,

as was contained in the Domesday Survey, to have their hand-mills and some amends made to them for being deprived of them, and to make all executions in the town by their bailiff without interference of the bailiff of the liberty or any one else.

To these demands the abbot refused to give any reply, and the townsmen, losing patience, besieged the abbey and stopped supplies by blockading all roads leading to it. They also assaulted Holywell Gate of the abbey with stones and flights of arrows but were repulsed by armed men, probably provided by the knights of the abbey. After the siege had continued about forty days the condition of affairs was brought to the notice of the king, who sent the sheriff with the posse comitatus to restore order, which was accomplished with some difficulty. Eventually a meeting was arranged to be held at St. Paul's Cathedral on 23 February, 1327, which developed into a court of arbitration. Three peers were deputed to attend and report to the council. Notwithstanding the previous legal decisions in the abbot's favour the whole of the evidence, including the entry in Domesday Book, the charters to the abbey and the charter to the town, were reconsidered and debated. Eventually an indenture of agreement was drawn up acknowledging all the claims of the townsmen except the right to hand-mills. The bounds of the borough were perambulated by twenty-four townsmen and all tenements within these bounds were to be burgages and all the dwellers therein to be burgesses. At first the monks refused to seal the indenture, saying they would rather die than allow it to be sealed. Strong influence, however, was being made at the court on behalf of the townsmen. A writ had already been issued to the abbot

forbidding him to interfere further in the liberties of the town, and now, at the critical moment, while the monks were hesitating to execute the deed of liberties, a letter was received by the abbot from the King enjoining him to seal it forthwith. The monks were dismayed and retired in a body leaving the abbot reluctantly to complete the agreement.

Thus for a short time St. Albans became a borough with its own officers and common council, its court held on St. Margaret's Day, a constable for each of the four wards and two chief pledges under him. They had their own seal, now preserved in the county museum. All these privileges were not to be exercised without considerable expense, necessitating heavy levies on the townsmen. This burden no doubt detracted from the general feeling of joy and gave satisfaction to the monks who never acquiesced in the arrangement, for the annulment of which they only waited their opportunity. According to the abbey chronicles 'the villeins who usurped the name of burgesses' were so elated with their success that they refused to obey the abbot even in spiritual matters. A few years later one, John Taverner, was accused of adultery, and in resisting the service of a summons by the abbot's marshal, was stabbed in the fray. The townsmen took Taverner's side and set upon the marshal in the Market Place 'with swords, spears, sticks, stones and anything they could find' and killed him. They then indicted the clerks and servants of the abbey responsible for the summons, and later the abbot himself and one of the monks, of the murder of Taverner, the marshal and a messenger of the abbot, and procured their imprisonment until the abbot pleaded his clergy and was

delivered by the ordinary. The action of the burgesses naturally caused great indignation with the monks, and the abbot, being unwilling to trust his case to the townsmen, raised the question of jurisdiction and demanded that a jury of the liberty should be joined to a jury of the town to inquire into the matter. The townsmen, on the other hand, claimed privilege under their charter and refused to be joined with foreigners or those who were not burgesses. The aggressive independence of the townsmen of St. Albans and elsewhere was probably alarming the government, and the power of the Mortimers, the supporters of the townsmen, having ceased, the matter was remitted in 1331 to the justices of trailbaston.\* The abbot thereupon seized the opportunity for which he had been waiting and began, as the chronicler admits, by laying in great store of provisions and wines at the Priory of Hertford, a cell of St. Albans, for feasting the justices. He reopened the whole question of the town liberties by indicting all the community for laying siege to the abbey in 1326, compelling the abbot and convent to seal a deed prejudicial to the liberties of the church of St. Alban, threatening to set fire to the abbey, preventing the servants of the abbot from entering the town, and generally for conspiracy. Some of the townsmen pleaded guilty and all were found guilty and had to make fine with the King. With regard to the hand-mills it was decided that the townsmen were bound to do suit at the abbey mills except with regard to thirteen claims in respect of particular houses in the town to which the right of

\* Or special justices authorized to take vigorous action against 'trailbastons' or men with clubs whose outrages had disturbed the country.

hand-mills was attached. A few days later 'at the hour of vespers' four of the townsmen went to the old abbot, then dying of leprosy, and submitted themselves on behalf of the community. A compromise was made whereby the abbot leased to the town his malt mill in consideration of their undertaking to grind all other corn at the abbey mill. At the close of the interview the abbot, in token of his good will, partook of wine and spices with the representatives of the town.

The townsmen, however, pleaded excuses until the abbot, losing patience, cunningly told one of them in secret that unless he consented to the terms proposed he would be prosecuted to the death, and he, thinking the others had agreed, consented. Being then in the abbot's grace he was compelled to use his influence with the others. Through him the deeds and charters, seal and chest were surrendered and the townsmen entered into bonds which in the total value exceeded 3000 marks. To complete the transaction the abbot invited the townsmen to dinner and, in the quaint language of the chronicler, benevolently received their gifts.

The heavy costs of these actions and the terrible pestilence known as the Black Death which swept over Hertfordshire in 1349 delayed any further contests between the abbot and the townsmen. At St. Albans the abbot and forty-seven of the monks died of the plague, and no doubt it was equally fatal among the townsmen. The new abbot, Thomas de la Mare, was one of the noblest characters that at any time ruled the abbey. He was connected with many of the nobility and had considerable influence in high quarters. A strong disciplinarian and good organizer, he was tactful and

conciliatory both with the inmates of the monastery and his tenants, though he took the precaution to crenellate or fortify the abbey in 1358. For over thirty years the townsmen lived in harmony with the abbey until that good feeling was broken by the rising of 1381, and even then, as the better element in the town confessed, only the force of circumstances had impelled them to go against their lord.

The whole story of the revolt of this time is very fully and dramatically told by Thomas of Walsingham, with all that wealth of detail in which he delighted. Rumours had reached St. Albans of the general rising of the peasants of Cambridge, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Kent early in June. About midnight of Corpus Christi day (13 June), some of the townsmen went to the abbot, evidently a visit at that hour implying a matter of urgency, to discuss the report they had received that the rebellious commons had gone to London and proposed to march on St. Albans. The abbot advised that a party of the townsmen should go to London to ascertain the real state of affairs and if possible to dissuade the commons from coming to St. Albans. The next day, Friday, *dies iræ, dies tribulationis et angustię, dies calamitatis et miserię*, as the chronicler describes it, the townsmen about 500 strong, under the leadership of William Grindcobbe, marched to London by way of Barnet, where a further contingent joined them. Instead of doing as the abbot suggested they treated with the rebels about going to St. Albans to compel the monastery to grant them their freedom. The more moderate views of Grindcobbe, however, prevailed and a royal writ was applied for to enjoin the abbot to restore the borough liberties to the town. In the evening many



of the townsmen returned from London with Grindcobbe. That night there were further demonstrations against the abbey, a house being pulled down, and threats were made 'to shave the beards of the abbot, prior and monks,' which was the slang of the period for beheading them. On Saturday there was further rioting and damage, and the rest of those who had gone to London returned, marching with banners bearing the royal arms which the insurgents adopted after the King had presented them with his banner at Mile End. All the town seems to have collected at Romeland outside the Great Gate of the Abbey. Here they broke open the prison which was at the Great Gate and held a mock trial of one of the prisoners, whom they condemned and beheaded, the others being set free. In the middle of the day Richard de Wallingford 'the greatest of the villeins' rode in from London in hot haste with the royal pennon borne before him, and carrying with him the king's writ ordering the abbot to deliver the charters of his predecessors to the townsmen. He rode up to the assembled crowd at Romeland and dismounting he fixed his standard in the ground, telling the people to guard it as though they were in battle. He then entered the abbey with some attendants to serve the King's writ. At first the abbot and monks said they would rather die than receive it, but at length Wallingford entered the church and delivered it. The abbot protested that the liberties claimed had been annulled by the courts, but Wallingford and those who were with him, brushing all argument aside, told the abbot he had better not exasperate the commons who, a thousand strong, were awaiting his answer outside, and 20,000 more were ready to

march on St. Albans under Wat Tyler to destroy the abbey and kill the monks. Then the abbot reproached them with ingratitude. Had he not been their abbot and father for thirty-two years, sharing all their troubles and trials, labouring for their necessities and dispelling their miseries, and now without cause they endeavoured to overthrow him, their intimate friend and kind lord. All this they admitted and declared that had not the present occasion arisen they would have created no trouble during his lifetime. But time pressed and an answer must be given to the people, so the abbot gave them what muniments he could find bearing on the subject and granted fresh charters of liberties. A bonfire was made of the surrendered muniments near the Eleanor Cross in the Market Place. A ridiculous demand was then made by the townsmen for a charter of liberties granted to the town by King Offa with letters in gold and blue. This, it was claimed by some of the old men of the town, they had seen, forgetful of the fact that St. Albans did not exist in Offa's day.

In the meantime some of the people had entered the cloister and dug up the millstones which had been placed as a pavement at the entrance to the abbot's parlour in memory of the plea between the abbot and the townspeople; these stones they broke up and gave a piece to each townsman as if it had been housling bread.

The people, still unsatisfied about Offa's charter, again collected at the abbey gate and threatened to destroy it. The abbot to appease them sent out great quantities of bread and ale and one of the elders of the town remonstrated with the rioters. ~~Matters had become so serious on the following day,~~

Sunday, that the monks were preparing to fly, when news arrived that Wat Tyler had been killed and the Commons of London had surrendered. Proclamation was therefore made that all persons should keep the peace on pain of forfeiture of life or limb. The people notwithstanding persisted in their claims and extorted a charter from the abbot, the contents of which they dictated and proclaimed at the market cross. They then perambulated the bounds of their borough and procured a confirmation of the king's charter of manumission to them and the villeins of the neighbouring villages. After this, the chronicler sarcastically remarks, they considered themselves gentry of royal lineage.

Notwithstanding the bitterness of feeling at the time, there is an interesting sidelight on the relations between the abbot and his tenants. The abbot, having sent some of the townsmen to supplement the royal army, they, out of pride or malice, said they had come on their own authority. As it happened, however, Richard Perrers, kinsman of the celebrated Alice Perrers, Edward's mistress, who was in the retinue of the abbot, recognized these men as some of the rioters at St. Albans and imprisoned them, intending to have them beheaded. In the meantime the imprisoned men sent word to their friends at St. Albans, and the elders of the town, rushing into the abbey while the monks were singing the *Te Deum* at Matins, told the abbot what had happened. Without delay the abbot despatched some of the monks to order Perrers to release the men and thus saved their lives.

But the time of retribution was at hand. The King had intended to come to St. Albans to mete out punishment himself, but being detained ~~in~~

Essex he sent Sir Walter atte Lee, who was no stranger to the town, on 28 June. On his arrival he urged the people to make their peace with the abbot, and calling before him the twelve elders of the town, told them to indict the principal insurgents. They persisted, however, that all were good and faithful subjects of the King. He then demanded the return of the charters, and upon their declaring that they did not know where they were, he refused to let them leave his chamber until the abbot came and interceded for them. The anger of the townspeople was further aroused by the arrest of their leaders, Grindcobbe and others. The abbot, fearing the abbey would be fired, called upon the neighbouring gentry and his esquires to protect it, and at the same time took the precaution to release Grindcobbe on bail in the then enormous sum of £300. Grindcobbe however preached sedition, but, with the true sense of a leader, he told his fellow-citizens not to consider his death if it should bring their cause nearer a happy issue. Fearing further disturbances, therefore, Grindcobbe was sent back to prison at Hertford.

A little later, on 12 July, the King arrived at St. Albans, where he spent eight days. He was met at the Great Gateway of the abbey by the abbot and monks with ringing of bells and singing. With him came the judge, Sir Robert Trysilian, chief justice of the King's Bench, who was not always too scrupulous in administering his office and himself suffered later at Tyburn the penalty he had inflicted on so many. Trysilian sat the following day at the moot hall which stood probably on the site of its successor, which still survives in the Market Place. ~~The prisoners were brought from Hertford, but again a jury would not indict them until remonstrated~~

with and threatened by Trysilian. John Ball, the priest famous for his sermon on the text 'When Adam dalf and Eve span, who was thanne a gentilman?' was tried and sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered as a traitor, at St. Albans. His sentence was fully carried out in the presence of the King on the 15th July, the four quarters of his body being sent for public exhibition as a warning to four towns. Eventually William Grindcobbe, William Caddington and John the Barber and a dozen others were condemned and sentenced to be drawn and hanged. Richard Wallingford and many others were imprisoned but were pardoned in October. After the bodies of Grindcobbe and others had been hanging for a little while they were removed from the gallows by their friends, whereupon the King ordered that the townspeople should be compelled with their own hands to replace the bodies, then putrid, on the gallows. It was not till a year and a quarter later that at the intercession of the Queen the bones of those hanged were permitted to be buried.

It is interesting to inquire who were the leaders in this rebellion. Grindcobbe came of a well-to-do St. Albans family. He had relatives among the monks at the abbey and had received his education at the grammar school. His brother was a wealthy cloth dyer in London, and he himself owned at least four houses in the town and some two acres of land besides. Richard Wallingford had the reputation of being the richest man in the town. William Caddington was a baker, and the others were tradesmen in the town. In the earlier rising one of the principal leaders was William son of John the Marshal who had been the representative of the town in the Parliament of 1314. These men were the

leading villeins of the town. The condition of serfdom in which they lived offered little redress against arbitrary measures of the abbot. In 1353 one of these villeins claimed £100 damages (equal perhaps to £3000 now) against the abbot for assault and two days' imprisonment, but he could obtain no remedy and was mulcted in damages for bringing an action against his lord. This is only one of many such cases. At the same time it must be admitted that a large number of the townsmen grew wealthy notwithstanding the disadvantages of their status. There was, however, a gradual decline in the prosperity of the town but this may be partially attributable to causes other than the influence of the monastery.

Whether the disputes between the abbot and townsmen were partly caused by their differences in politics or whether the differences in politics were the result of the disputes there is nothing to show, yet it is a fact that in all political questions of the fourteenth century and later, the abbey took the part of the royal or aristocratic side and the townsmen took the opposite side. This difference in politics may have been a reason for the abbot's strong opposition to the claims of St. Albans to return two members to parliament. As early as 1300 a writ was issued to St. Albans to return members to parliament, but then and again in 1304 no return was apparently made. The first parliament to which, so far as our evidence goes, St. Albans sent members was the anti-papal parliament at Carlisle in 1306-7, when Simon de Trewyk and Adam atte Style were returned.

Writs were afterwards issued irregularly for the election of members, but in 1309 and 1311 writs to

the parliaments in which the party opposed to the King was in power, were received by the sheriff, but by persuasion of the abbot he refused to return the names of the St. Albans-burgesses elected, so that the borough was disfranchised. On complaint, inquiry was ordered to be made and as a result apparently, a writ was issued for the parliament of 1315 which again was strongly opposed to the King's party and two burgesses were returned. Then came the judgment adverse to the townsmen, and there is no evidence of any writ being issued for St. Albans until the townsmen established their claims in 1327. Two members were returned to the parliament of that year called at the instigation of Mortimer and yearly to subsequent parliaments, until the reversal of the decision in the townsmen's favour, and the downfall of the Mortimer interest, in 1331. Thus it will be noticed that it was only while the party opposed to the King and unfavourable to the abbey, was in the ascendancy, that St. Albans sent members to Parliament. Then again in 1335-7 writs were issued for an election at St. Albans, but after this date St. Albans returned no more members until the sixteenth century. The members elected for the borough in the fourteenth century were paid at the rate of 2s. a day, and the writs for the payment of such expenses are still extant.

## V. THE WARS OF THE ROSES

THE fifteenth century was a period of transition throughout the country. The labour difficulties resulting from the Black Death were completely altering the aspect of the rural districts and the same forces were changing the life of the towns. Such changes were strongly felt by monastic towns like St. Albans. The townsmen here, beaten and exhausted in the great economic and social struggles of the previous century, had settled down in a less aggressive spirit to a new life. The organization of the town was undergoing a complete change. As early as 1377 Abbot de la Mare, with a view to counteract the spirit of discontent which had so long existed, had instigated the foundation of the gild of St. Alban, by which he hoped to regulate the secular activities of the members through the religious connexion of the Gild with the abbey. The religious services of this fraternity were performed at the altar of St. Mary at the Pillar, which stood below the painting of the Virgin and Child still to be traced on the fifth pillar from the east on the south side of the nave. The members who, we are told, were of the upper and middle classes, were bound to be present in their gild liveries when the relics of St. Alban were carried in procession out of the monastery. The gild had a secular side and



probably took some part in the affairs of the town, for it seems to have sided with the townsmen in the revolt of 1381 and on that account was dissolved. The establishment of other gilds led to a similar result. The gild of St. John the Baptist in St. Peter's church, for the wealthier townsmen, and the gild of the Holy Trinity, at the altar of the Holy Trinity in the north transept of the abbey church, were dissolved in the same manner for opposition to the abbot. We do not know what that opposition was, but it was probably caused by the leanings of the townsmen to the doctrines of Wycliff. Sir John Oldcastle, the supposed origin of Shakespear's Falstaff, was a strong supporter of the Lollards or idlers, as Wycliff's followers were called, and had many friends in St. Albans with one of whom, it is said, he was for a time in hiding in 1414 and 1417. On the latter occasion the house was surrounded by the abbot's servants, but Oldcastle managed to escape though some of his adherents were seized and some books found in which the images and names of the Virgin and Saints had been erased. A plot is said to have been discovered for the destruction of the abbey by the Lollards, and endeavours were made to apprehend the 'poor priests' and other distributors of the Lollard tracts which were mysteriously circulated at St. Albans and elsewhere. A little later a seller of papal pardons was murdered in the town, the crime being attributed to Lollards.

At the end of the fourteenth century the gild of All Saints or Charnel Brotherhood was founded. On its religious side the gild maintained a warden at the parochial chapel of St. Andrew, which stood on the north-west of the abbey church, and a

chaplain at the Charnel Chapel, the lower part of the walls of which still form a part of the boundary wall at the south-west corner of St. Peter's churchyard. This gild, which was composed of both brothers and sisters, became wealthy by reason of the great number of bequests made to it by the leading townsmen. It apparently had some recognized position in the management of the town affairs. Its meetings were held at the Moot hall and it was this gild apparently that built the Clock Tower between 1403 and 1412, and maintained it until it was handed over in 1587 to the corporation by trustees who apparently represented the gild. The tower probably had a clock from the time it was built, but there is definite evidence of one in 1485. The principal accessory of the Tower is the bell *Gabriel* which has hung there since the tower was built. It bears the inscription *Missi de celis, habeo nomen Gabrielis*, and the mark of William or Robert Burford, bellfounder, who worked at Aldgate between 1371 and 1418. The bell was rung as a warning to bring the townsmen together, particularly in the case of fire and fray, every morning at four to awaken the townspeople for their work, and as the curfew at eight in the evening to give notice when the market closed and shops were to be shut.

Great changes had also been taking place at the monastery which had never recovered from the effects of the agricultural difficulties consequent on the Black Death. One of the schemes of the abbots to replenish their depleted coffers was the encouragement of the villeins and bondsmen on the abbey lands to purchase their manumission or freedom from base service. There is no direct evidence that the townspeople of St. Albans took advantage of this

system of enfranchisement, yet as the tenants in the adjoining rural districts were doing so, it is highly probable that many of the townsmen also obtained in this way a part of the freedom for which they had so persistently fought, although it did not give them the much-coveted rights of burgesses.

The increasing number of visitors to the abbey brought further changes both in the condition of the abbey and the town. The abbey had always kept open house to guests. In it was a large room, we are told by a mayor of St. Albans, who died in 1608 at the age of 103, 'having beds set on either side for the reception of strangers and pilgrims where they had lodging and diet for three days without question made whence they came or whither they went but after that time they stayed not without rendering an account of both.' Royal visitors were frequent at the abbey; King John the Good of France, taken prisoner at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356, was more than once an honoured guest of Abbot Thomas de la Mare during his four years' captivity in England, and spoke later of the courtesy he had received. Beyond the usual concourse of guests and pilgrims Abbot John Wheat-hampstead, as a courtier, attracted to the monastery royalty, nobility and others who constantly came to him for advice and frequently paid prolonged visits. This necessitated a largely increased household of servants, and when Abbot William Wallingford entered the abbey after his election in 1476 he was accompanied by a retinue of some four hundred and forty servants and tenants. With so large a number of laymen dependent upon the monastery, there grew a slackening of discipline, the vow of poverty was no longer kept, and offices

which had formerly been held by monks and lay brothers were performed by hired servants. The altered conditions of the monastery reacted upon the town. The woollen weavers, fullers, dyers, and merchants gave place to innkeepers and retail tradesmen who made it their business to cater for the needs of the abbey and its guests, and for the vast number of travellers passing through the town to and from the north and midlands.

Notwithstanding all these changed surroundings the townsmen maintained a position of moderate wealth and comfort. We may judge of this from the wills proved during the fifteenth century and from the amount of building which was carried out at the expense of the inhabitants. Besides the clock tower already referred to, the nave of the church of St. Peter and the chapel of St. Andrew were rebuilt and the Charnel and Cornwall chapels in St. Peters churchyard were erected, while many fittings and decorations were added to these and the other churches, largely if not wholly by the subscriptions of the townspeople. The quiet of the town was frequently relieved by scenes of pageantry—kings with their retinues, nobles and ecclesiastics with their attendants, merchants with their wares, pilgrims and beggars were constantly coming and going, while processions of religious persons and gildsmen in their liveries passing through the streets must have added colour and picturesqueness to the town.

St. Albans had lost much of its democratic tendency owing to its greater dependence on the abbot and his guests. The abbey, on the other hand, more than ever maintained its old aristocratic bias and threw in its fortunes with the House of



ST. ALBANS ABBEY BEFORE RESTORATION, FROM THE NORTH-EAST



Lancaster, of its connexion with that party the heraldry of the wonderful ceiling of the presbytery of the abbey church is so reminiscent. The council which Edmund Duke of York called at St. Albans in 1399 to oppose Henry of Bolingbroke after he had landed at Ravenspur broke up in disorder, whether under the influence of the abbot we do not know. A little later in the same year Richard II. was brought a captive from Flint to London, and St. Albans was chosen as his place of imprisonment for some days under a guard of a thousand men. In the following year when the King's body was being carried from Pontefract it rested two days at St. Albans and after being exhibited at St. Pauls received the rites of burial at Kings Langley from the abbot of St. Albans.

During the reign of Henry VI. St. Albans was brought into close touch with the Court. The King paid several visits to the abbey, the earliest of which was in 1427 when he stayed there with his mother; as a boy of six years old. Abbot John Wheat-hampstead was the intimate friend of the King's uncles John Duke of Bedford and Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, and it was to 'the good Duke Humphrey' that the abbey owed the great confirmation of its liberties in 1440. In return for the affection shown by the Duke, the abbot received his body for interment in the church and erected a fine tomb to his memory. On account of a dispute with the Crown regarding certain of the Duke's gifts, the ardour of the monastery towards the Lancastrian cause somewhat cooled, so that, when the pretensions of the Duke of York were raised, the abbey was more or less neutral.

In 1450 the country was roused by the attempted

arrest of Richard Duke of York by Edmund Beaufort Duke of Somerset. York marched on London with 4000 men and at St. Albans there was a scuffle with Sir Thomas Hoo, chancellor of Normandy, and his men in which Sir William Oldhall, the famous soldier in the French campaigns and builder of Hunsdon House, nearly lost his life. Somerset was shortly afterwards dismissed from power, but during an interval of sanity, Henry VI. recalled him to court. The king's action caused consternation among the Yorkists, and the Duke of York in 1455 wrote to the king from Royston and again from Ware, demanding Somerset's removal. No attention being paid to his demands he marched with an army of about 3000 men to St. Albans. Here he encamped in a field called Keyfield at the back of the Cross Keys or Peter's Keys Inn which stood facing Chequer Street on the site of the present London Road. The King and Somerset were at Watford on their way to Leicester and on 22 May, 1455, arrived at St. Albans with an army of about 2000 men. Apparently to their surprise they found York already in the town. The King, according to tradition, slept the night at Hall Place, a house at the north end of St. Peters Street, lately demolished, a part of which may possibly have existed in the fifteenth century. Here his ghost is said to have haunted a panelled room to the last. The King's forces took up an unfortunately confined position and set up the royal standard in the Market Place, where they had no room for manœuvring. After some parleying and the ringing of the alarm bell in the Clock Tower, the offensive was taken by the Duke of York between 11 and 12 in the morning. He began by drawing off a part of the



King's troops to the north by an attack at Butts Lane, now Victoria Street, while the remainder of the royal forces rushed down Holywell Hill to the south to stop an attack of the Yorkists at Sopwell Lane. In the meantime the main body of the Duke's men under the Earl of Warwick broke through into the Market Place between "the signe of the Keye and the signe of the Chekkere," shouting their battle cry of "A Warwick, a Warwick, a Warwick!" Thus the Lancastrian forces were cut in two and in half an hour were completely routed. Somerset, according to Shakespear, was killed at the entrance to the Castle Inn which stood at the north side of Victoria Street, facing the Market Place where the first onslaught was made. Besides the Duke of Somerset, Henry Earl of Northumberland, son of Hotspur, and Thomas Lord Clifford, famed for his service in France, were killed and their bodies, by special request of the abbot, were buried in the Lady Chapel of St. Albans Abbey, while many knights and others who fell were buried in St. Peters church and churchyard. In the quaint words of the chronicler the King's household, disliking the sight of blood, withdrew, leaving the poor King standing alone in the Market Place near his standard. He was eventually induced to go to the little house of a tanner after being wounded by an arrow. It was here that York, Warwick and Salisbury found him and sought his forgiveness on their knees, which the King willingly gave them and 'desired them to cease their people and that there should no more harm be done.' The King spent the night at St. Albans Abbey and on the next day he accompanied the Duke of York, who had been reinforced by the Duke of Norfolk with 6000 men, to London. Although

the town suffered from pillage the Yorkist troops appear to have been under some discipline and no great damage was done.

Some six years later St. Albans was the site of another battle in the Wars of the Roses. On 12 February, 1461, Warwick set out from London to oppose the Queen's forces coming from the north and pitched his camp on Bernards Heath to the north of the town, at the same time securing the town itself. The Queen's army of wild undisciplined northmen came along Watling Street from Dunstable on 17th February. On approaching St. Albans they took the offensive and adopted similar tactics to those used by Warwick at the previous battle. A body of troops was detailed to go up Fishpool Street to make a feint attack on the Market Place, where they were repulsed by Warwick's men stationed at Queen Eleanor's Cross. In the meantime the main body of Margaret's army had debouched to the left along what is now called Folly Lane and Katherine Lane, with the idea of cutting Warwick's army in two. These tactics were partially successful, the main part of the Yorkists' army being driven on to Bernards Heath. The fighting continued on the Heath until nightfall, when the Yorkists fled. The King had been taken first to Sandridge and then to No Man's Land Common between Sandridge and Wheathampstead, where he was left with one squire to attend him, Sir Thomas Hoo, a Hertfordshire landowner. Here Queen Margaret found him sitting under an oak 'smiling to see the discomfiture of the army' and much rejoiced to meet the Queen and Prince. On the following day the King knighted the Prince and Sir Andrew Trollope, a rough soldier who had risen

from the ranks in the French wars and now placed in command of the wild horde which Margaret had raised in the North. Trollope protested he was quite undeserving of the honour for, he added, "I slow but xv men for I stode styлле in oon place and they come unto me but they bode styлле with me."

The Queen's undisciplined troops were under less control than the Yorkist army, victors in the previous battle of St. Albans. The abbey and its cells of Sopwell and St. Mary de Pré were spoiled, the Queen herself carrying off the finest jewel to be found in the abbey. St. Albans and the country round were sacked and the stores of provisions destroyed. This wanton destruction caused a scarcity of food which was so severely felt by the town and the monastery that the latter had to disperse for a short time, the first occasion that the continuity of service had been stopped at the abbey since its foundation. Such was the requital for the faithful adherence of the abbey to the Lancastrian cause. The victory, however, was only a temporary success, for the Lancastrian cause was lost and the country was soon to settle down again to its peaceful occupations.

It was only appropriate that St. Albans, whose monastery had contained the most important scriptorium in the country, should have one of the earliest printing presses to be set up in England. The information which survives as to this press is very scanty. We learn from Wynkyn de Worde, Caxton's successor, that the "Chronicles of England" were first printed by 'one sometyme scolemayster of St. Albans' and in the colophons of the books known to have been printed at St. Albans

it is stated they were printed 'apud villam Sancti Albani' or at St. Albans. The press was working from about 1479 to 1486, three founts of type being in use, the earliest unlike any other used in this country, and the two later somewhat similar to one of Caxton's types. The books issued were eight in number, (1) the *Elegance of Cicero* (1479), by Augustine Dactus, only one copy exists of this work which was apparently for use in St. Albans school; (2) *Rethorica Nova* (1480), by William of Saona, also probably for use in the school; (3) *Liber Modorum Significandi* (1480), by Albertus, a work on logic; (4) *In Aristotelis Physica* (1481), by Joannes Canonicus; (5) *Exempla Sacra Scripture* (1481); (6) *Super Logica Aristotelis* (1482), by Andreas Antoninus; (7) *The Chronicles of England* (1483) (compiled at St. Albans); (8) the last and best known, the *Book of Hawking, Hunting and also of Coat Armours* (1486), generally called the *Book of St. Albans*, and attributed to Juliana Barnes or Berners of Sopwell Priory. Not even the name of the schoolmaster printer at St. Albans is known, and it has been suggested, owing to the similarity of some of the type, that there was a connexion with William Caxton who worked at the Westminster press from 1477 to 1491 and the late Dr. Edward Scott, keeper of the Muniments of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, has gone as far as to suggest that the St. Albans press was set up at a little piece of land called St. Albans between the chapter house at Westminster and the House of Lords which was occupied by Otwel Fuller, schoolmaster of the Almonry school at Westminster. But the facts that the colophons of two of the books show they were printed at the *vill* or town of St. Albans

and the Book of St. Albans gives on the last page the arms of St. Albans Abbey beneath which are the words Sanctus Albanus, strongly point to the press being at the town of St. Albans.

We hear no more of printing at St. Albans for nearly fifty years, and then in 1534 John Hertford printed Lydgate's *Life of St. Alban and St. Amphibalus* at the request of Abbot Robert Catton. It is probable that his printing press was within the abbey precincts as the majority of the seven books that can be traced to his press were printed at the request of Richard Stevenage or Boreman, the last abbot, and one work was written by a monk of the abbey. In 1539 Hertford was sent up to London for printing 'a little book of detestable heresies.' What the work was which caused the trouble is not definitely known, but it was probably 'A very declaration of the bond and free will of man. The obedience of the gospel and what the very gospel meaneth.' As the abbey was dissolved in that year Hertford probably never returned and in 1544 he set up his press in London, where he died in 1548.

## VI. THE DISSOLUTION OF ST. ALBANS ABBEY

THE unsettled conditions of the fifteenth century led the way to the religious, social and political upheaval of the Reformation period which left a permanent mark on every class and community in the country. St. Albans, traditionally dependent upon the past, was peculiarly affected by the changes of the time. The abbey, the outstanding influence in the district, had been gradually declining for a century before its dissolution. The school of history had ceased, though the library was still maintained, and the monks no longer excelled in the arts. Wolsey, who was abbot from 1521 to 1530, took no interest in the abbey and it is even doubtful whether he visited it. As a result of the absence of proper authority, discipline, already slackening, still further declined. But what perhaps tended largely to the downfall of most of the monasteries was their financial condition which in many cases was verging on a state of bankruptcy. This was the condition of St. Albans for some time before abbot Richard Boreman or Stevenage and thirty-eight monks surrendered the house into the King's hands in December, 1539. These thirty-eight monks were all the inmates of a house which had provision for a

hundred and whose average number was between fifty and sixty.

The suppression of the monastery brought a completely new outlook to the town. Instead of the lands there and in the neighbourhood being wholly in the hands of a great ecclesiastical body, impoverished and somewhat reactionary in its methods, they became split up among men who had paid for them with capital upon which they desired some return either in money or pleasure. Sir Richard Lee, Henry's famous military engineer, who acquired a considerable proportion of the lands in the immediate neighbourhood of the town, spent large sums in building his house at Sopwell, the ruins of which survive, and making the park and in setting out new roads with the object of improving his property. Gorhambury was bought by Ralph Rowlatt, merchant of the Staple, whose brass effigy is in St. Albans Abbey. He likewise spent much money in building Holywell House at the bottom of Holywell Hill. Kingsbury was purchased by Sir Thomas Wendy, physician to Henry VIII., Edward VI. and Mary, who represented the borough in the parliament of 1554. Childwick went to Sir William Cavendish, Wolsey's devoted servant and biographer, and builder of Chatsworth. Pré was granted to Richard Raynshaw, sergeant-at-arms to Henry VIII., whose name is immortalized by the charities of his family to the town. These and many others obtained grants of the lands of the abbey and other religious corporations owning properties in the district, and sold portions of them to the wealthier townspeople. Thus families like the Gapes, Pembertons, Robothams, Skipwiths and those of other prominent burgesses grew into importance.

The coming of such men opened a new era, and it was by their influence that the townspeople were able to obtain the independence for which they had fought during the previous three hundred years, and far more. By a charter dated 12 May, 1553, King Edward VI. incorporated the town under the title of the mayor and burgesses of the borough of St. Albans. The corporation was based generally on the constitution of London, the old friend and counsellor of the town. It was to consist of a mayor, who took the place of the bailiff, and ten principal burgesses who were to make rules for the trade and victualling of the town. The corporation was to meet at the moot-hall or town house and the charnel house. The officers of the corporation were a steward, chamberlain, clerk of the market and two serjeants of the mace. There were to be a court leet and view of frankpledge which were to enforce regulations for order and decency in the town, and a court of record for the recovery of debts under £38.

The most interesting parts of the charter were the sections relating to the grants of the market and fairs, the abbey church and the grammar school, and it may be well to give a short account of each of these institutions so far as it relates to the interest of the town. The right to hold the market probably goes back to the foundation of the town about 950. Rather more than two hundred years later Henry II. confirmed the right to the abbot and from 1247 and perhaps from the date of the foundation of the town the market has been held on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The fair on the feast of St. Alban was apparently held by prescription. Henry I. granted another fair to be held at the feast of the



Nativity of St. John the Baptist for eight days. A fair held at the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin was granted to the priory of St. Mary de Pré, and at the suppression of that house was given to St. Albans. All these fairs, which were apparently held at Rome-land, were granted to the town of St. Albans by the charter of incorporation. The fair held at the feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist was however changed to Michaelmas, and it and the Lady Day fair became pleasure fairs while St. Albans fair became a horse fair. They all gradually decayed and were finally abolished in 1873.

When the Corporation took over the markets, the trade of the town was still ruled by its position as a centre for traffic rather than of industry. Its development therefore lay in providing for the increased number of travellers and growing quantity of goods passing through the town. In the earlier part of the sixteenth century St. Albans had its craft guilds or trade companies of innholders, victuallers, butchers, brewers, bakers, mercers, shoemakers and possibly others, all of which were in 1587 grouped in the companies of innholders, mercers, shoemakers and victuallers. It may be noticed that two out of the four trades represented catered for travellers; the trades not enumerated were so insignificant that they were taken under the wing of one or other of the companies mentioned as was customary in other provincial towns.\*

The abbey church acquired by the Corporation under their charter for the sum of £40 according to one source, and £400 according to another, was to

\* These companies were in 1664 reduced to two, the mercers and innholders, and we lose sight even of these after the establishment of the Reformed Corporation of 1834.

take the place of the parochial chapel of St. Andrew. No doubt the townspeople originally attended the services at the nave altar in the abbey church and continued to have rights in the church which gave them probably some claim to it at the dissolution of the monastery. Their presence, however, became inconvenient after the introduction of the constitutions of Lanfranc by Abbot Paul de Caen at the end of the eleventh century. To overcome this difficulty the chapel of St. Andrew was built for the use of the town at the north-west corner of the abbey church and was dedicated by Herbert Losinga Bishop of Norwich (1094-1119). This chapel was rebuilt when the nave of the abbey church was lengthened early in the thirteenth century. A much larger building was erected about 1454, mainly at the expense of the townsfolk who were probably the brothers and sisters of the gild of All Saints, as we learn from their wills. The parishioners having no churchyard at St. Andrews made a composition with the vicar of St. Peters for burial in St. Peters churchyard.

The staff of the chapel at the beginning of the fifteenth century consisted of a vicar or warden who was also warden of the gild of All Saints, two priests (later increased to four) one of whom served at the charnel or gild chapel at St. Peters, and four singing boys. Early in the sixteenth century the abbot, to increase the revenue of the abbey, leased the wardenship to a priest at a rent of £13 6s. 8d. This led to a reduction of the staff, but so long as the lessee was a priest no other inconvenience occurred. When however after the dissolution of the abbey the officers of the Court of Augmentations let the wardenship to the innkeeper of the Fleur de

## DISSOLUTION OF ST. ALBANS ABBEY 67

Luce and he had to find a priest to serve the chapel, the contributions of the parishioners rather naturally fell off, so that there was insufficient to pay both a priest and the rent. The services consequently suffered and in 1550 the innkeeper was seven years in arrear with his rent. Another reason for the decay of St. Andrews chapel may be that the parishioners seem by their wills to have anticipated the grant of the abbey church and to have used it for services and burials as early as 1547 and perhaps before.

The abbey church, which now became the parish church, was begun by Abbot Paul de Caen (1077-93), and his rebuilding was completed in 1088. Of his work there still survives the eastern part of the nave, the presbytery, tower and transepts, in all of which the massive Norman work is without incised ornament of any kind, its plainness being relieved only by a simple but effective scheme of colour decoration, composed of bands and scrolls in red, yellow, blue and white and lines of imitation masonry. With the increasing ritual brought into use in the twelfth century, it was found necessary to lengthen the nave at the end of that period. Abbot John de Cella (1195-1214) devised an elaborate scheme for rebuilding the western part of the church. The architectural details were to be carried out in the elegant and dignified style which had then only just been introduced. The west front was to have had two great flanking towers and the roof of the nave was to have been groined. The preparation for all this work was made and can still be seen, but the artistic temperament of Abbot John could not cope with the frailties of man and he was imposed

upon by all with whom he came into contact. The money saved for the work was soon exhausted, and at the Abbot's death little had been done. His successor, Abbot William de Trumpington (1214-35), had to do the best he could under the circumstances, to finish the building. He abandoned the towers and the groined roof and completed the work as simply and inexpensively as possible. The work of the two Abbots can still easily be distinguished. Some fifty years later (1257) the presbytery showed signs of collapse, which led to the gradual rebuilding of the eastern parts of the church. Here again a scheme for a groined roof was intended and abandoned, but such preparations as flying buttresses can be seen outside the church. The Lady Chapel was finished by Abbot Hugh de Eversdon (1308-26). In 1323, the eastern part of the nave arcade on the south side fell, and four bays were rebuilt. It is interesting to notice an attempt to harmonize this work, but in the later style, with that of the early thirteenth century further west. The arcade was completed in 1343. The nave screen was added in the middle of the fourteenth century and the high altar screen in the latter part of the next century. Thus briefly is shown the growth of this great building which competes with Winchester as the longest church in Britain.

The maintenance of the huge building without any special fabric fund was always a tax on the resources of the townsmen. Certain fees for admission of freemen were set apart for the repairs of the church, but from time to time money had to be borrowed by the corporation and appeals for subscriptions to be made in order to save the building from decay. All England is deeply indebted to the

patriotism of the corporation of St. Albans for the preservation of this great national monument, which was no light tax on their resources during the three hundred years it was under their charge.

Another institution which the mayor and burgesses obtained under the charter of 1553 was the grammar school. There is evidence of the existence of the St. Albans Grammar School in the eleventh century, and Mr. A. F. Leach, in his article on the school in the Victoria County History, considers that there is little doubt it existed before the Conquest and in all probability from the ninth century. It appears that Geoffrey de Gorham \* afterwards abbot (1119-1146), who came from Maine, was summoned by Abbot Richard d'Aubeny (1097-1119) to teach in the school at St. Albans. But being late in arriving he found the appointment had already been made, so he taught at Dunstable until there should be a vacancy at St. Albans. While at Dunstable he wrote a miracle play called "St. Katherine" which he proposed to have acted. For this purpose he borrowed some of the choir copes from the sacrist at St. Albans abbey. The night after their arrival his house caught fire and all his books and the copes were burnt. Seeing no possibility of repaying the loss 'he offered himself as a holocaust to God and St. Alban' and became a monk at the abbey.

The next reference we have to the school is with regard to Alexander Neckam, famous for his scholastic prose and poems, some of which have been printed in the Chronicles and Memorials Series. He was born at St. Albans in September, 1157, on

\* He took his name from Gorron or Gorram, in Normandy. Gorhambury, the seat of the Earl of Verulam, which adjoins St. Albans, is named after this abbot.

the same night as Richard I., his mother being the king's wet nurse. He was educated at St. Albans and continued his studies at Paris. About 1185, while teaching at Dunstable and being anxious to become master at St. Albans school, he wrote to Abbot Warren asking for the post. The Abbot replied with a play on Neckam's name: '*Si bonus es, venias, si nequam nequaquam*' (If you are good you may come; if bad, by no means). Neckam was master for about ten years and later became abbot of Cirencester. He was succeeded as master by one Warren, a nephew of the abbot, and it was during his mastership that it was said there was scarcely a better and larger school in England.

About 1286 the school was established on the north side of Romeland, opposite to where it now stands, under a gift of Richard de Nauntes. A few years afterwards a new set of statutes was made, the principal articles in which relate to the maintenance of order and the punishment by fine, excommunication or chastisement for disorderly conduct by the scholars.

It would appear that the school was composed of a master appointed and paid by the almoner of the monastery, an usher, under usher, bachelors or older scholars who had either taken their degree at the university or were ready to take it at the school, and the ordinary scholars, a certain number of whom, perhaps a dozen, were the abbot's poor scholars and were boarded in the almonry. The poor scholars were admitted for five years; they received the tonsure and read matins daily. On the feast of St. Nicholas of Myra (6th December) a boy bishop was appointed, who, dressed as a bishop with mitre and episcopal staff, performed episcopal

functions for that day, a custom which was kept at most English schools.

It is uncertain if the grammar school fell with the abbey. If it closed at all it was for a very short time, for in 1549 a private act was passed authorizing the late abbot Richard Boreman or Stevenage, to erect a free school in St. Albans or elsewhere as he might think fit, for 144 scholars. There were to be three teachers, of whom the chief was to be the schoolmaster and the second who was to be the usher, both of whom were to be laymen, while the third was to be a priest. Boreman proposed to establish the school at the Charnel Chapel, in St. Peters churchyard, but there is no evidence whether the school was ever held there. In 1551 Boreman received a grant of the Lady Chapel of St. Albans abbey to be converted into a school and a few months later he conveyed his interest in the chapel to trustees probably for the inhabitants of St. Albans. In 1553, however, the burgesses of St. Albans under their charter of incorporation were empowered to erect a grammar school in the abbey church or other convenient place in the borough and thereupon established it in the Lady Chapel. The corporation, on behalf of the school, received a charter from Queen Elizabeth in 1570, at the petition of Sir Nicholas Bacon, under which two persons were to have the monopoly of selling wine in the town from the profits of which the master of the school was to receive £20 a year. These licences were later confirmed and extended.

By certain rules devised in 1570, by Sir Nicholas Bacon, the lord keeper, it appears that the school opened at 6 A.M. in summer and 7 A.M. in winter and continued until 11 A.M., when the scholars went

home to dinner. It reopened at 1 P.M. and continued until 5 P.M. The number of scholars was to be limited to 120. Each scholar had to provide his own ink, paper, pens and candles, and a bow, three arrows, bowstring, a shooting glove and a bracer or armed guard to exercise shooting. The school flourished during the seventeenth century, but during the next two hundred years the numbers decreased until in 1873 there were only six boys. In 1871 it was moved from the Lady Chapel to the Great Gate which was built about 1370 and possibly included a portion of the almonry where the poor scholars of the pre-Reformation school had been lodged. In 1908 the school entered upon its new premises, erected at a cost of £10,000 obtained chiefly from a grant by the Hertfordshire County Council. Under its present and previous head masters the number of scholars has greatly increased.

To complete the possessions of the town the surviving trustee of the Clock Tower in 1587 handed to the corporation the trust of the oldest inheritance of the townsmen and the cherished symbol of the alleged independence of their predecessors.

The great changes in religious thought which were passing over the land could not fail to leave their influence on the minds of the inhabitants of St. Albans, but there was little outward sign of strong feelings on one side or the other. The wills of the burgesses, those very human documents which perhaps show unrestrainedly the feelings of their makers, point in many instances to conservative tendencies by the continuance of bequests for prayers for their souls, for torches and so on. But these it may be argued were the opinions of an older generation then passing away. As early as 1535



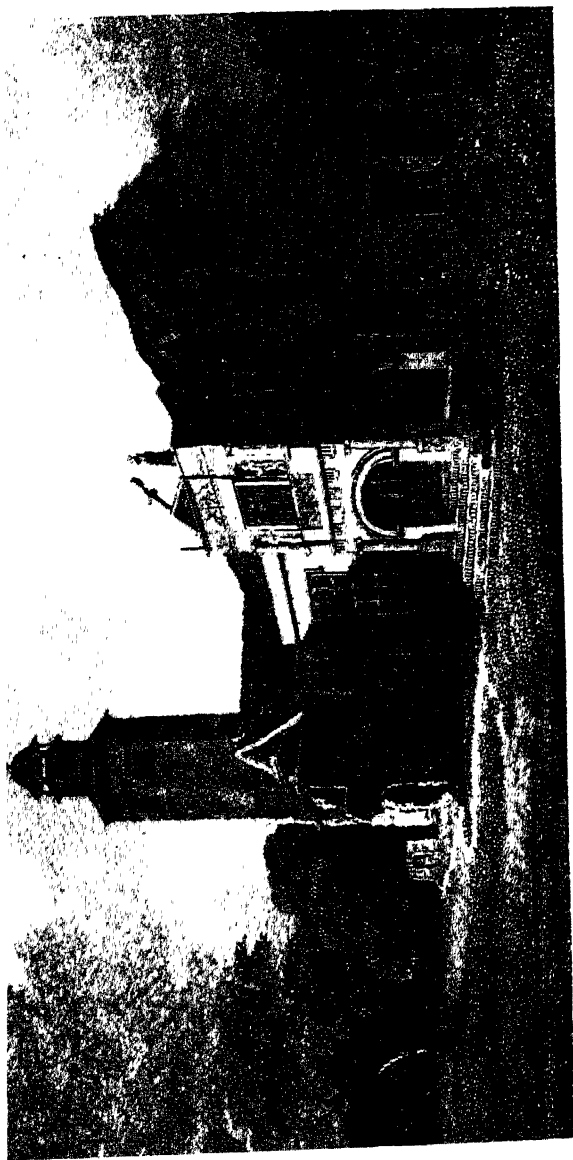
Wakefield, Cranmer's chaplain, 'an earnest preacher of God's word,' being vicar of St. Peters, had serious disputes with Thomas King the warden of St. Andrews. King, a popular man, had alleged that the king's marriage with Anne Boleyn was void and Katherine of Aragon was the true Queen. Further he preached to his people that they must obey the Pope under pain of damnation. Being called up for examination before Cranmer, for whom he had a supreme contempt, he asserted that the archbishop was a man of small learning and was unable to answer such points of scripture as he, King, brought in his defence. King was able to defy Cranmer owing to the question of the archbishop's jurisdiction in the exempt liberty of St. Albans. Some of the townsmen, however, took the matter up and pointed out to Cromwell, the vicar general, the condition of religious teaching. They expressed the hope that he would appoint 'true preachers, certifying you that with the exception of the archdeacon, a monk of St. Albans and Mr. Wakefield there is never one to our knowledge within this liberty that manifests the full truth in their preaching but rather smelleth of their old mumpsimus. So the people are in doubt who to believe.'

The changes made in Mary's reign did not noticeably affect the town. The proposed re-establishment of the monastery, which was seriously considered, was not carried out. Persecutions so far as we know, did not actually touch the inhabitants, although George Tankerfield, a Marian martyr brought from Newgate, was burnt for heresy at Romeland in 1556. A story is told that Tankerfield was taken to the Crosskeys Inn and, calling for a fire, he pulled up his hose and put his leg as near as

possible to the flame to test his power of endurance for the morrow.

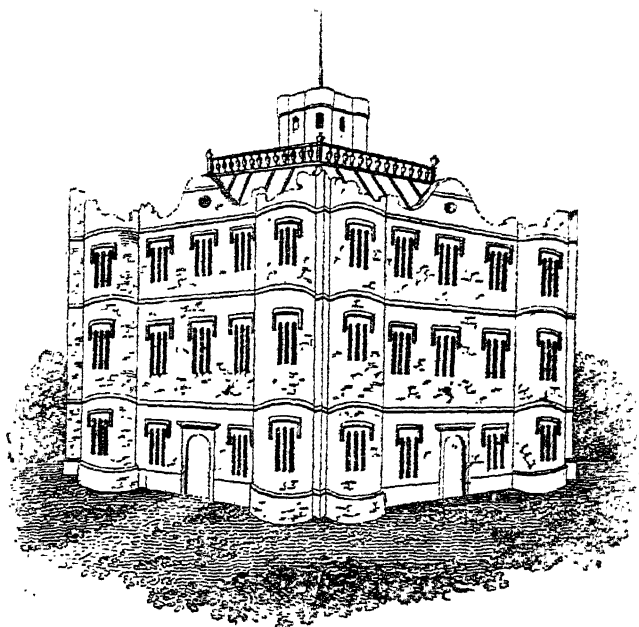
With the reign of Elizabeth the prevailing influence in the town was that of the Bacon family. In 1561 Sir Nicholas Bacon, the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, purchased the Gorhambury estates from Ralph Rowlatt, grandson of Ralph Rowlatt the Crown grantee after the Dissolution. Sir Nicholas began at once to pull down the old house said to have been built by Geoffrey de Gorham about 1200. In 1568 he completed his new house, the ruins of which remain in the park. He took a considerable interest in the town and was appointed High Steward of the Liberty of St. Albans in 1559. His chief interest was with the grammar school to which he presented some books still in the possession of the school, and when in 1570 Queen Elizabeth paid him a visit to see his new house he procured for the benefit of the school the wine charter already referred to. Sir Nicholas immediately after obtaining the grant compiled the orders upon which the school was for long governed. His name was included as follows in the prayer said every Sunday for the benefactors : ' amongst the rest of thy creatures Sir Nicholas Bacon knight . . . a benefactor of the free school in St. Albans and the Lady Anne his wife and their offspring may . . . through the multitude of thy mercies exceeding all their works and all their wickedness enjoy the fruits . . . of their redemption for ever.'

Elizabeth was again at St. Albans in 1573 on her way to Gorhambury, and on a third visit in 1577 she stayed at the Bull Inn on Holywell Hill. She went on to Gorhambury before supper on Saturday, May, and remained until after dinner on



REMAINS OF GORTAMBURY HOUSE  
FROM A DRAWING BY G. M. S. A. D. 1890.





PONDYARDS; SIR FRANCIS BACON'S HOUSE.

Wednesday following. Sir Nicholas presented the Queen with a cup and she gave him her portrait painted by Hilliard which still remains at Gorhambury House.

Sir Nicholas' more famous son Sir Francis Bacon, the Lord Chancellor, who lived at a house on the Gorhambury estate called Pondyards, also took an interest in local affairs and was a benefactor to the school.

It may have been due to the interest of the Bacon family, but more probably on account of the nearness of St. Albans to London, that the courts

were held in St. Albans abbey in 1594 when the plague raged in London.

Elizabeth always had tender recollections of her early association with Hertfordshire, and when news came in 1588 that the Spanish Fleet was on the seas it was to Hertfordshire that she sent for her body-guard of 500 men to go to London, a circumstance on which we find the county priding itself some fifty years later. St. Albans sent its proportion of men for the guard. Besides these a thousand trained men of Hertfordshire were ordered to be sent to Lord Hunsdon, the Lord Steward, at Tilbury. Of this number St. Albans supplied 52 men, for whose maintenance and equipment a special levy was made in the borough and willingly paid. One of the series of beacons which was to spread the news of the invasion from hill to hill was waiting ready to be fired in the town, possibly on the abbey tower. But happily the Great Armada was dispersed by the mightier hand of Providence and the preparations so carefully made were unnecessary.

Possibly on account of the dislocation of industry in the Armada year there seems to have been an abnormal amount of distress in the town. A large store of faggots was laid in, a part of which may have been for the beacon but the greater portion was supplied for the use of the poor. At the same time a good deal of money was expended in employing Anthony Moner, a Dutchman, to teach the poor to spin and make worsted; looms and other things necessary were purchased at Hertford and work was begun in February, 1589, with four men who were to be taught to comb and dress wool and some children to be taught spinning.

## VII. THE CIVIL WAR

ST. ALBANS, traditionally democratic like other towns in the eastern and midland districts of England, took the side of the Parliament in the civil wars of the seventeenth century. The inhabitants for the most part had strong puritanical leanings. They ejected the vicars of St. Peters and St. Michaels and in the place of the former, a Laudian pluralist and 'a scandalous minister,' they appointed an extremist of opposite views who broke the stained glass windows of the church and destroyed the tombstones and brasses which contained any reference to the Virgin or prayers for the souls of the departed. The townsmen were encouraged in their Puritanical tendencies by some of the more prominent burgesses, John Robotham, Alban Cox, Roger Pemberton and others. Sir John Jennings, their representative in parliament, more than once suffered imprisonment for shielding and defending the soldiers who had pulled down the altar rails and in other ways profaned the churches. To promote the teachings of the Puritan Party a rate of twelve pence on all rents was imposed in 1644 for maintaining a preaching minister, a practice which few, if any other town adopted. The townsmen further strongly objected to the levy of ship

money, and a petition was presented to Parliament against the rigorous methods adopted in its collection by Sir Thomas Coningsby, the sheriff.

The Parliamentary party however had not absolute control in the town. The mayor, William Newe, who was apparently a royalist, bewildered by the numerous proclamations from both King and Parliament, unfortunately for his own comfort selected those from the King. For this he was called to the bar of the House and being unable to give what was considered a satisfactory reason for his selection, was committed to the Fleet. On his liberation he assumed that the expenses of his imprisonment were incurred by reason of the execution of his office and tried to charge them on the town, but his fellow-burgesses would have nothing to do with them. The proclamations which were the cause of the mayor's trouble were those for raising troops for the King. They met with an unsympathetic response, while the call for men for the Parliamentary army was well answered. The drilling of the infantry recruits for the Parliament with musket and pike, was undertaken by John Marsh, afterwards a member of the council of war for the county, and that of the horse by Alban Cox of Beamonds, Cromwell's confidant, who as a remembrance of his friendship kept the Protector's jack boots which are still treasured by his descendants. The men thus trained probably joined the army under the command of Robert Devereux, the last of his line of Earls of Essex, a grim parliamentary general of dogged perseverance but of little brilliance, who is said to have carried with him wherever he went, his coffin, shroud and escutcheon, in preparation for death. The army under his command, some



2000 strong, arrived at St. Albans in August, 1642, on its march northward and later to the west, which resulted in the Battle of Edgehill (23 October). The general had a bodyguard of gentlemen of the Inns of Court and the army was accompanied by 'ten great pieces' of artillery and three score carts of ammunition which were drawn up in the Market Place probably to the interesting gaze of the inhabitants, as cannon then played a small part in battles, being reserved mainly for siege work. The uniforms of the men were irregular, but they all wore sashes of orange, the Parliamentary colour, to distinguish them from the Royalists who wore red sashes. Discipline was poor and the civil population then and later was in constant fear of being robbed and plundered by the troops of both sides, until Cromwell remodelled his forces. Lady Sussex, a sympathizer with Parliament, had to own that she was obliged to barricade Gorhambury House against the soldiers at St. Albans.

After Edgehill there was a race towards London between the Royalist and Parliamentary armies. The Earl of Essex, after staying some days with his army at St. Albans, arrived first and thus prevented the approach of the Royalists to the metropolis.

Again it seems the town was not wholly in the hands of the Parliament, for in January, 1643, we find the royalist sheriff, Sir Thomas Coningsby, reading from the Market Cross on market day the King's proclamation for the commission of array. Before he had finished a dramatic scene occurred, owing to the sudden appearance of Captain Cromwell with a party of troopers on their way to Cambridgeshire. Cromwell immediately grasped the situation, and with six troopers attempted to seize the sheriff,

but was held back by the sheriff's retinue and sympathizing townsmen. Coningsby, with some spirit, managed to get back to the Cross to complete his reading of the proclamation. Cromwell sent for twenty more troopers and Coningsby with his supporters had to take refuge in an inn yard, possibly that at the Red Lion, where he was eventually taken prisoner. Even then the Parliamentary troopers had to barricade themselves in the yard for a while before they could send their prisoners away to London, there to be brought before the House and later to be committed to the Tower.

Cromwell was at this time making his reputation as an organizer. The increasing strength of the royalist party at the end of 1642 necessitated more effective organization of the Parliamentary forces and it was partly due to Cromwell that the Eastern Counties Association, which was to take so important a share in the later events of the war, was formed. On the Council of War for Hertfordshire, which was subsidiary to the Association, St. Albans was well represented. Amongst those who sat on it, mention is made of the mayor, Richard Jennings the member, and Edward Wingate, who at a later date represented the town, John Pemberton and Ralph Pemberton, father of the chief justice, John Robotham and John Marsh. It was necessary however that St. Albans should be well represented, for as the northern gate to London it was the principal base for military operations in the Home Counties. It did not need elaborate fortifications but defensive works were thrown up during 1643 at the three entrances, namely from the north a little beyond St. Peters church, from the midlands at St. Michaels, and from London on Watling Street at St. Stephens.

It is difficult to trace any of these works at the present day, as the ground where all of them probably stood has been much disturbed and the earthworks were not of an elaborate character.

During the first half of 1643 the Parliamentary armies were engaged in the north and west, but there was always a fear that the Royalist forces at Oxford might make a dash for London. With this in view a rendezvous for the Parliamentary troops was formed at St. Albans in the summer, where soldiers began to assemble. A little later the Earl of Essex made it his headquarters with an army of some 15,000 men, in order more definitely to oppose any advance of Prince Rupert whose forces were then in Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. At St. Albans the Earl of Essex was joined by the Earl of Bedford who having originally taken service with the Parliament had become a Royalist and fought at Newbury, and now desired to surrender himself to the Parliamentary party.

Throughout the earlier stages of the Civil War great difficulties were encountered by the Parliamentary armies through the want of supplies both in food and money. Nothing but the personal influence of the Earl of Essex prevented the pillaging of the town of St. Albans by mutineers during the winter of 1643. Essex wrote to the government that he had only a week's pay 'having paid nothing else but what bleeding necessity compelled me to.' His captains remained unpaid and some of them, through weakness or wounds, were ready, he said, to perish. If the soldiers were not paid by the end of the week, he intimated on 17 December, he would be unable to keep them together without plundering the country. He himself could not

remain to hear the crying necessity of his hungry soldiers. The required supplies did not come and the Earl was forced to grant his soldiers free quarters among the townsmen and the people in the neighbourhood. This 'intolerable burden' was keenly resented by the inhabitants who complained they could not so much as enjoy the freedom of their own houses but had been subject 'to many grievous insolences besides the consumption of all the provisions that they had laid in for their families.' They had submitted to all this in the hope of the payment of their expenses, but apparently they received no redress.

It is not surprising that the townspeople were anxious to get rid of the soldiers as soon as possible. Some relief was given them by sending away large drafts in the early part of 1644, and shortly afterwards the whole army marched out to join Waller's forces for the proposed attack on Oxford. Here the royalist strategy outwitted Waller and after the defeat of the Parliamentary troops at Cropredy Bridge on the Cherwell near Banbury on 29 June, London and the south-eastern counties were threatened. In alarm the people of St. Albans begged that Essex and his army might be recalled, but Essex was in Devonshire and could not be brought back. As an alternative Major-General Browne was ordered to collect a mixed force of trained bands in London and the adjoining counties. For a time he fixed his headquarters at St. Albans, and again the peace of the townspeople was disturbed by unruly and undisciplined soldiers. Writing in July Browne complained that the regiments of Essex and Hertfordshire were weary of their service and would not be ordered without mutiny. The

remnant of Waller's army joined Browne's mutinous band, but the committee at St. Albans said they could no longer pay the regiments and recommended that the men should be sent home. This advice was not taken, but the men, who, as the general declared, were only fit for a gallows here and a hell hereafter, deserted in large numbers.

This state of affairs could not be allowed to continue, and early in 1645 the new model army was established. Both Lord Essex's and Sir William Waller's armies had been greatly depleted by desertion, and as the numbers could not be brought up by voluntary enlistment impressment was resorted to. The impressed men were at first discontented and mutinous, but strict discipline and regular pay gradually improved the service until the new model army became a force which perhaps has never been surpassed for efficiency. St. Albans, being one of the principal depôts for the training of recruits, saw the exaction of severe penalties for desertion and mutiny, and several trials and executions took place in the town. The discipline was particularly strict after the Battle of Naseby in June, 1645, when numerous prisoners came through St. Albans on their way to London and had to be placed in the churches for shelter and security.

Naseby practically broke the power of the Royalists, and although Fairfax had many further skirmishes in the west the first phase of the Civil War was over. Charles had surrendered himself to the Scottish army and while a prisoner at Holdenby House in Northamptonshire in 1647, the intrigues for his restoration, carried on by the army, made it more convenient that he should be brought to Richmond. Parliament became alarmed and ordered

the disbanding of the army, which was refused by the two generals then at Royston. Following up their refusal they threatened London and marched an army of 20,000 men to St. Albans where they set up their headquarters. On 14 June delegates from the Council of the city of London arrived at St. Albans in three coaches with attendants on horseback. Fairfax, to pay them every respect, sent officers and a trumpeter to meet them at Holywell Hill. After dining with the general and officers the delegates requested the army not to come within thirty miles of London.

A few days later the king on his journey southward arrived at St. Albans on a Saturday market-day. A great demonstration was prepared, the church bells were rung and he and probably Fairfax were feasted by the Corporation. In the evening he went on to Hatfield House. On 24 June Fairfax moved the army to Berkhamstead to meet the demands of the Londoners that they should not be within thirty miles of the metropolis.

The long disputes between Parliament and the army led to the rising of the royalists, and the absence of Cromwell in the west of England gave the King's party their opportunity. In July, 1648, alarms were frequently made and skirmishes occurred in the neighbourhood of St. Albans. A Royalist army under the Earl of Holland entered the county from Harrow and passed through St. Albans on its way to Luton, hotly pursued by the Parliament men.

After the fall of Colchester, Fairfax again made his headquarters at St. Albans, bringing with him in September, 1648, that long line of wounded and sick prisoners who had to be accommodated in

St. Peters church and when well enough were sent on to Bristol to be sold as slaves for the West Indies or for service in continental armies. The account of the payments for cleansing and repair of the church after their departure is still extant.

Fairfax's residence at St. Albans produced tragic results. The military party had come to the conclusion that the King ought to be brought to trial as a public enemy, and Ireton, Cromwell's son-in-law, drew up a Remonstrance of the Army in which it was argued that the King was a traitor for attempting to turn a limited into an absolute monarchy and that the Prince of Wales and Duke of York with a number of the King's adherents should be punished as accomplices. Fairfax called together a council of officers, one of the most momentous assemblies recorded in English history. It met on 7 November, 1648, in St. Albans abbey church and, after discussing the terms of the Remonstrance for five days, finally adopted it. Thus the fate of the King was sealed. The instrument was sent up for presentation to Parliament by Col. Ewer, a Hertfordshire man who afterwards went to the Isle of Wight to fetch the King and probably took part in his removal to Hurst Castle. Parliament, having tendered the King certain heads for negotiation, refused to discuss the Remonstrance, and consequently Fairfax and the army marched on London. Fairfax occupied London on 2 December and four days later Col. Pride seized the approaches to the House and administered 'Pride's Purge' by turning back all members who were obnoxious to the army. Amongst those excluded was Sir Harbottle Grimston of Gorhambury, near St. Albans. The impeachment of the King followed. And so

the great tragedy, the opening scene of which was laid in the abbey church at St. Albans, ended on the scaffold at Whitehall.

The execution of the King caused considerable murmuring in the country. John Gere, the somewhat extreme puritan minister at St. Albans abbey church, is said to have died when he heard the news.

As St. Albans was the place of conference which led to the abolishing of the monarchy, so it was to be the place of negotiation for its restoration. General Monk, travelling in his coach from Scotland by way of Watling Street, arrived at St. Albans with an army 6000 strong on 28 January, 1660. Here he was received with bell-ringing and much rejoicing, and here he remained with his army for five days conferring with the Parliament in London for the withdrawal of the garrison there and other matters preliminary to the coming over of Charles II. Monk's footsteps had been dogged by Scott and Robinson, the parliamentary commissioners, who spied on all his actions. Having procured a room at St. Albans which was only divided from that of the general by a wainscot door 'they either found or made a hole to hear and see' all that passed in Monk's chamber. The commissioners were extremely suspicious of Monk and strongly disapproved of the favour he showed to those who presented petitions for restoring the excluded members. Scott in a passion said that old as he was he would gird on his sword again and keep the door of the House of Parliament against such members.

Monk not only had to put up with the importunities of the parliamentary commissioners, but was compelled to attend at lengthy prayers and



long sermons in St. Albans Abbey church by Richard Lee, rector of Hatfield, and Hugh Peters 'the prince of army chaplains.' After settling the preliminaries to the Restoration at St. Albans he moved to Barnet on 2 February and arrived in London on the following day.

In less than four months Charles was back in England and the Restoration had been effected. At St. Albans the proclamation of the King on 8 May produced great rejoicings; church bells were rung; sack and tobacco were freely served at the Market Cross, and beer was provided for the soldiers to drink the King's health. In the evening bonfires were lighted, when there was more drinking and merrymaking. As a part of the Restoration festivities St. Albans sent a deputation to the King in London and presented him with 'one hundred pieces of gold.'

As a natural result of the altered political outlook the appointments to the offices held under the Corporation were reconsidered and changes were made. The royalist clergy also were recalled to their livings. As in most towns, however, party feeling still ran high and the next phase in the history of St. Albans is one of political intrigue under the influence of the neighbouring landowners which forms the subject of the next chapter.

## VIII. POLITICAL CORRUPTION

THE scandals regarding the parliamentary elections at St. Albans which became so notable a feature in the later history of the borough seem to have had their origin in the seventeenth century. For over a hundred years the parliamentary representation was mainly in the hands of two families: the Jennings of Holywell House, St. Albans and Water End, Sandridge, and their descendants the Churchills and Spencers on the one side, and the Grimstons of Gorhambury on the other. In 1628 Sir John Jennings, a strong puritan, and Robert Kirkham were returned members for the borough, and Jennings continued to serve with Edward Wingate, a parliamentary soldier, all through the Long Parliament. Jennings' place was taken in 1659 by his son Richard who sat for St. Albans until his death in 1668. Richard was the father of the celebrated Sarah who married John Churchill, afterwards Duke of Marlborough, Queen Anne's great general. Sarah Jennings was born on 5 June, 1660, probably at Holywell House, St. Albans, and was baptized at St. Albans Abbey church twelve days later. She spent most of her girlhood at Holywell House or Water End and was frequently there after her marriage. It was to Holywell House that she and her husband retired after his imprisonment



HOLYWELL HOUSE, RESIDENCE OF THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH  
FROM A DRAWING BY G. SHEPHERD, 1866



in the Tower on an unproved charge of conspiracy against William III. in 1692 ; and here on the day after their arrival Prince George and Princess Anne of Denmark drove down to visit them. The Prince and Princess were so charmed with Holywell House that they spent some time there with the Marlboroughs a year or two later. The Duchess was sincerely attached to St. Albans and was never tired of praising its air. In 1714 she wrote that however ordinary Holywell House might be, she would not part with it for any house she had seen in all her travels.

During the early years of their married life the Churchills were too much occupied with intrigues at court to give any attention to local affairs, so that the Whig interest of the Grimston family prevailed at the parliamentary elections and Samuel Grimston succeeded Richard Jennings as member for St. Albans. On the accession of James II. a great endeavour was made by the Crown to capture the municipalities in the Tory interest. The town charters were surrendered under pressure, and the members of the corporation, usually with Whig leanings, were disfranchised and in their place Tory mayors and corporations were nominated under the new charters. At St. Albans the charter was surrendered in 1685 and under the new one, John Sellioke, the ardent Tory innkeeper of the Red Lion, was reappointed mayor, and the aldermen were selected for their adherence to the Tory party. It was apparently difficult to find inhabitants with this qualification as the majority of the new aldermen thus chosen lived outside the borough and had no interest in it. Viscount Churchill, as John Churchill had become, always on the side where his interest

lay, was made high steward of St. Albans in the place of Sir Harbottle Grimston and stood as Tory parliamentary candidate with Thomas Docwra, a local landowner, against Sir Samuel Grimston, son of Sir Harbottle, and Sir Thomas Pope Blount, the Whig candidates. There was great excitement in the town over this election, the Whigs being apparently the favourites. The mayor threatened that if his fellow innkeepers did not support Lord Churchill their licences would be revoked and Lord Churchill's dragoons would be quartered on the town. On receiving the new charter from Lord Churchill, the new aldermen retired to a tavern and lighted a bonfire to attract the attention of the people. Shouts were raised 'Who dare cry a Grimston or a Blount' and those who did were promptly locked up. On the day before the election the mayor started to pack the electorate with new freemen, a practice which for a long time brought discredit on the town. He made forty-six freemen on whom he could depend and refused to admit other townsmen to their freedom under King James' charter, telling them 'that in good time if they behaved themselves well they might be made free.' On the day of the election Lord Churchill's place was taken by his relative George Churchill, and he and Docwra were declared duly elected on a poll of under 100 votes, half of which were given by strangers, instead of a very much larger poll. Lord Edward Seymour, when the House of Commons met, called attention to the corruption which had been generally practised at the elections, but so enthusiastically loyal were the members that he could not find a seconder to his motion. The members soon began, however, to distrust James, and his demands for the

employment of Roman Catholic officers having received a flat refusal, parliament was prorogued and later dissolved.

With the ascent of William and Mary to the throne the charter of James II. was annulled. Churchill, who had become Earl of Marlborough, had deserted James and joined the then popular Whig party. Thus the interests at St. Albans of the Churchills and Grimstons were united and George Churchill and Sir Samuel Grimston were returned in the Whig interest to the Parliament of 1689 and continued to represent the town until the death of the latter in 1700. At the election of 1701 the Churchills had again become Tory and in order to procure the election of George Churchill and John Gape, the Earl of Marlborough induced the mayor, Edward Seabrook, to make a number of freemen without the consent of the aldermen. The mayor, no doubt trusting to be exonerated from blame by the Earl's influence, did as he was desired. Unfortunately for him, however, the Earl went abroad and Lady Marlborough, having leanings towards the Whigs, left him to be prosecuted and convicted for his unlawful action, and later to be removed from the office of alderman. In 1705 Sarah, now Duchess of Marlborough, who seems to have taken up the management of the electioneering campaign, went down to St. Albans especially to support George Churchill and Admiral Kelligrew and to oppose the return of John Gape, the Tory candidate. In this she was unsuccessful, although Gape was shortly afterwards unseated for bribery and corruption. He in turn had the satisfaction of unseating his opponent on a like charge in 1714. Although it was thought there would be no real opposition to the

election of Mr. Lomax in 1710, the Duke of Marlborough wrote to the Duchess begging her 'not to be at St. Albans neither before nor at the election fearing you might meet with some insult, which would be a mortification to me.' At the election of 1722 it appears that the mayor, William Carr, had promised his influence to Lord Grimston and Joshua Lomax, the Whig members of the previous parliament, but the Duchess of Marlborough, who now lived much at Holywell House, seems peremptorily to have ordered him to give his interest to the Tory candidates William Clayton and William Gore. Knowing that Lord Grimston and Lomax were gentlemen 'that deal much in the town and pay well' the mayor despaired of 'putting up two strangers with any success.' At the same time he felt himself compelled to obey the commands of the Duchess. He held a court at midnight a few days before the election to take counsel what could be done, and, as a result, being postmaster he sent post horses into the adjacent counties and towns to bring in any who were willing to vote for the Tory candidates, to be made freemen gratis. By this means a large number of voters was secured. Further he threatened the Whig partisans by men armed with clubs and staves who assaulted and knocked down good subjects, crying "Down with the Rumps! Down with the Roundheads! No King George's Justices!" The aldermen declared that the inhabitants should no more have the liberty of electing burgesses, they boasted they had made about 300 honorary freemen and would make a thousand more if necessary. These tactics, however, were soon found to be dangerous as parliament would be compelled to acknowledge their





*J. in the original*

SARAH DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

FROM A MEZZOTINT BY JOHN SMITH (1705) AFTER A PAINTING BY  
SIR GODFREY KNELLER



illegality. At the last moment therefore a direct form of bribery was instituted and every inhabitant and legal freeman who would promise to vote for the Tory candidates was offered a sum to be agreed upon, varying apparently from ten to eighteen guineas. The bribery was all done openly, a public office of bribery being fixed at the town clerk's house and the sums agreed upon paid by the Duchess of Marlborough. Although Lord Grimston and Lomax endeavoured to unseat their opponents they were unsuccessful. It was probably about this election that a story is told of the Duchess taking a somewhat ungenerous advantage of a poetical weakness of Lord Grimston. In early life he had written a play called "Love in a Hollow Tree," which Pope and Swift satirized mercilessly. Lord Grimston withdrew the play from sale but the Duchess reprinted it with a frontispiece showing an ass wearing a coronet and an elephant dancing on a tight rope, which she dedicated to the Right Sensible the Lord of Flame. This she distributed among the electors of St. Albans bringing her opponent into considerable ridicule in a manner that was typical of the time.

The system of bribery once started naturally increased in costliness, and in 1727 Sarah Duchess of Marlborough declared that as without spending and bribing to the amount of a thousand pounds she could not expect her grandson to be elected, she was determined to have no more to do with the election. Two years later, however, she proposed 'to set up' her grandson John Spencer, who afterwards became Earl Spencer, and contended that if Lord Grimston 'set up' his son it would be very hard upon her family as both families at the time were

running the Whig interest. At all these elections the practice was continued of packing the constituency with freemen admitted gratis for the purpose of the election. This system reached its height in 1743 when a hundred or more strangers were thus admitted. Considerable indignation and outcry were raised by these tactics and it was considered advisable to abandon them in future. The more direct method of bribery was adopted as the alternative at the election of 1743 for the parliament which sat under Pelham's 'Broad Bottom Administration' during the anxious time of the Jacobite Revolt of 1745.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Tory or later the Conservative party at St. Albans settled down under the leadership of the Grimston family while the Whigs or Liberals put themselves under the Spencers. The electors, independent when there was no question of bribery, would have no truck with the peerage. At the political club, apparently in the Whig interest, the members boasted in 1785 that their club, being 'established on true constitutional principles,' refused to admit Lords Salisbury, Spencer, Fairford or any peer into its society. The members however were not, it appears, averse to drinking a peer's health when he provided the means for doing so.

Notwithstanding the closer touch between members of parliament and their constituents bribery increased rather than diminished. In 1796 one Waddington spent, it is said, £5000 in trying to win over the constituency to the newly formed radical party. His method, after the custom of the time, was to meet the mayor and about a hundred and fifty of the electors at dinner at the Bell and Red

Lion Inns, where it is said he had a very good reception. Every three weeks afterwards for some time supper was provided at these inns for all the electors who cared to regale themselves at his expense. But his efforts were of no avail and he apparently lost heart and retired from the contest.

Party feeling ran very high at the election of 1807 which brought in the long Tory administration under Lord Liverpool. Upon the return of James Walter Grimston and Joseph Halsey, the Tory candidates, Earl Spencer and Viscount Althorp immediately resigned their offices of aldermen and Earl Spencer that also of high steward. Bribery as usual was rampant, one elector was in expectation of the whole twenty pounds 'for opening his house,' the term used for giving his vote, which he was prevented from doing 'by his own neglect or absence,' but Lord Verulam hoped he would consider a gratuity of fifteen pounds as 'an ample remuneration for his friendship.' Both parties continued to bribe openly and without shame. It became so much a part of the electioneering campaign that it was difficult to recognize political parties, the inhabitants being almost solely influenced by pecuniary motives and 'split their votes between candidates of opposite political opinions.'

The influence of the Spencer family declined as the nineteenth century advanced, but the liberals were still strong and comprised some of the gentry and most of the nonconformist tradesmen. On the other hand the conservative interest of the Verulam family was maintained and continued to return one member at each election up to the Reform Act of 1832. There was however no strict party discipline

and a large number of the electors was attached to each party whose allegiance 'mainly depended upon the distribution of money.' Besides the two recognized political bodies there was another of no fixed politics called the Third or Contest Party which was invariably bribed. The practice of these electors was at the time of an election to hang out keys in different parts of the town as a sign that a candidate would be brought down 'to open the borough.' There was a settled price for each vote which was recognized by both parties. 'A plumper received two guineas and each split vote one guinea,' which was paid openly as a matter of course by the political agents who took round a bag of money from house to house doling out its contents. At the election of 1841 the bribery oath, it is stated, was taken by every voter who came to the poll and yet it was estimated that upwards of £4000 was spent in bribery.

This corrupt state of affairs continued through the first half of the nineteenth century, but it could not long survive the Reform Act of 1832, which gave the right of election to some 63 freemen, 66 inhabitants paying scot and lot, and 354 £10 householders, thus making bribery more expensive and more difficult. Things came to a head at the election of 1850 when bribery was so flagrantly committed by the agents of both parties that a petition was presented to the House. The election committee to which the petition was referred was unable to make due inquiry owing to the absconding of some of the principal witnesses. They came to the conclusion however that bribery was the result of a system which had been the ordinary accompaniment of every political contest. A Parliamentary

Commission was subsequently appointed which sat from October, 1851, to the end of January, 1852. It appears from the Report of the Commission that some of the electors 'had been up in London hawking the borough about for sale.' They approached Alderman Carden who declared he would only consent to stand on 'purity' principles and stipulated that no money should pass for the purpose of influencing votes. The alderman himself seems to have adhered to these principles, but not so his committee. Mr. Jacob Bell, the successful candidate, on the other hand, knew that money was being advanced on his behalf for the purpose of bribery and that he owed his election to bribery. The cost of the elections since the Reform Act, it was stated, was more than £37,000 of which two-thirds or about £24,600 was spent in bribery. The commissioners concluded their report by declaring 'that the practice of bribery at election of members to serve in Parliament for the borough of St. Albans hath long prevailed in the said borough and that bribery to a great extent was systematically committed there at the last election for a member to serve in Parliament.' As a result of the finding of the Commission, St. Albans was in 1852 disfranchised as a borough and attached to the western division of the county in which it has since remained.

## IX. MODERN DEVELOPMENTS

UNTIL the middle of the nineteenth century St. Albans was a quiet market town, but the increased accessibility brought by three lines of railway gradually developed it during the nineteenth century into a residential suburb of London, then a cathedral town, and later an industrial centre.

Hertfordshire had for a long time been a pleasure-ground for Londoners, and St. Albans, as has already been shown, had had intimate relations with the metropolis from an early date, an intimacy which rested mainly on the easy means of communication. The highway to London during the Saxon period was by Watling Street, on the maintenance of which the abbots of St. Albans paid considerable attention. The Roman road was at an early date diverted at St. Stephens by way of Holywell Hill to the Market Place and then turning at a right angle along what is now High Street and Fishpool Street to St. Michaels, where it rejoined Watling Street. About the eleventh century a new road was made to London, which branched off from Holywell Hill by Sopwell Lane, passing Sopwell Priory which stood where the ruins of Sopwell House now are, on through Shenley to London. The St. Albans end of this road was closed about



1562, when Sir Richard Lee made the park around his house at Sopwell. What is now known as the Old London Road was then constructed through London Colney and Barnet by connecting and improving pieces of then existing roads. The remains of Sir Richard Lee's park wall, composed of moulded stones from Sopwell Priory and St. Albans Abbey, are still to be found buried in the bank on the south side of the road as far as The Mile House. This road was improved and straightened under an Act of 1794, when a new entrance was made into the town by the present road in continuation of the High Street. The awkward right angle turning from Sopwell Lane into Holywell Hill, and the steep ascent of that hill, were thus avoided, and in order to lessen the steepness of the new road the hill on the east side of Alma Road was cut through and the hollow westward was filled up, as the cutting and embankment here show.

The road northward from St. Peters Street to Harpenden and Luton and the road to Sandridge and Wheathampstead are both ancient, but the former at one time followed the track skirting the western side of the common. The Verulam Road was constructed in 1833, when the Earl of Verulam made a new carriage drive to Gorhambury and enclosed a part of Watling Street from 'the Gorhambury Block' of the Roman wall to Bow Bridge. To take the place of the part of Watling Street thus destroyed, a new road was made from High Street to Bow Bridge where it joined Watling Street, the new road being called after the Earl, the Verulam Road. Hatfield Road, formerly Cock Lane from the Cock Tavern standing at its western end, and before that in the sixteenth century New

Lane, was merely a bye-road or track to Hatfield until in 1820 it was taken over by the Trustees of the Reading and Hatfield Turnpike Road and much improved and widened in 1824.

These were the principal roads which made St. Albans a centre of traffic and brought some seventy-two coaches daily through the town in 1826. Each coach had its inn where its passengers could be regaled and fresh horses could be supplied. The numerous carriers passing through the town in like manner had their public houses at which they called. As a result the town comprised a very large number of coaching inns and taverns, the remains of many of which, shorn of their former prosperity, still survive.

Although there was a scheme in 1817 for bringing a railway into St. Albans and making a terminus at Romeland, railways did not reach the town until comparatively late in the development of their systems. The first to be brought here was the branch line of the London and North Western Railway from Watford, which was opened in 1858 amid great rejoicings, a general holiday being declared and a public dinner given to the Railway Directors at the Town Hall; towards these expenses and 'to provide amusements for the humbler classes on so auspicious an occasion' a public subscription was raised. There was an idea of continuing the line along the valley of the Ver, but this was abandoned. The next line to serve the town was the branch of the Great Northern Railway from Hatfield which was opened in 1865. Two years later the Midland Railway main line was available for goods, and in 1868 the station was opened for passengers. The stations of all these

lines are built on the southern and eastern outskirts of the town at the bottom of the hill on which the town stands. The latest means of public conveyance between London and St. Albans is the line of motor omnibuses running from Golder's Green to the Market Place, St. Albans. This service brings much local traffic from outlying districts for shopping and the markets, and is a favourite form of excursion for Londoners on Saturdays and Sundays.

The lines of traffic have from the first ruled the plan of the town. Holywell Hill, the Market Place and St. Peters Street, High Street and Fishpool Street, with the houses fronting on them and their gardens behind, gave the irregular shape to the borough which it retained until the nineteenth century. The Market Place, though much built over at its southern end, still keeps its original shape. The Eleanor or Market Cross was replaced in 1703 by an octagonal building surmounted by the figure of Justice, which contained the town pump. This building was removed in 1810, but the pump remained for a time, and the spot is now marked by a drinking fountain erected by Mrs. Worley in 1874. The Clock Tower, which was used by the Admiralty as a semaphore signalling station at the time of the Napoleonic Wars from 1808 to 1814, was allowed to fall into disrepair later in the century, and it was only by the patriotic efforts of a few of the townsmen that this rare example of a town "beffroi" or belfry was saved from destruction and restored by public subscription in 1864. French Row, which probably takes its name from the stalls of the medieval French wine merchants, contains the remains of the ancient Fleur de Luce and Christopher Inns. In the middle of

the Market Place is the Town Hall, built in 1831 from designs of George Smith, which took the place of the Moot Hall, now the shop and printing works of Messrs. Gibbs and Bamforth. The name of Chequer Street is derived from the Chequers Inn which stood where the Queen's Hotel now is. A little way down Dagnal Street, which dates back to the thirteenth century, a square red-brick building, now a storehouse for old iron, was formerly a Unitarian Chapel at which Dr. Martineau used to preach. Spicer Street is so called from lands here allotted to the office of Spicer of the abbey. College Street retains a part of Dr. Cotton's Collegium Insanorum, of which the poet Cowper was an inmate in 1763. Romeland or Roomland is a name given to an open space in other medieval towns. Here, outside the Great Gate of the monastery, the fairs were held, processions were formed, and it was at this spot that the townsmen collected together when the abbey was threatened at the time of the Peasants' Revolt. After the Dissolution the importance of Romeland diminished, but it was the site of the martyrdom of George Tankerfield in 1556 and the meeting-place of the trained bands, and here was the pound. At length, in 1812, the greater part of Romeland was enclosed as a burial ground for the Abbey parish and planted with trees; thus the imposing effect of a great open space in front of the main entrance to the Abbey has been lost.

The first important change in the plan of the town was made by the construction of the New London Road about 1794 already referred to. Along this new line of traffic houses soon sprang up. At the town end of the road on the north side were

built the quaint little white-plaster houses with green verandahs typical of the early part of the nineteenth century. And so the lines of frontage along the new road gradually became filled, the sections where the embankment was made being naturally the last to be built upon. The roads leading off from the new road were made a little after the middle of the last century. Marlborough Road follows the line of the track which existed along the borough boundary here, the remains of the 'Tonman's Dyke' being traceable on its west side. Lattimore Road apparently takes its name from the family to which Cobden's friend, the free-trade farmer of Wheathampstead, belonged, and the name of Alma Road gives the date of its construction.

The next extension in the plan of the town was the making of the Verulam Road in 1833, which again gave a new line of frontage available for houses. These developments of the town necessitated a readjustment of the borough boundaries,\* and arrangements for the supply of gas (1824), water (1833), and of a sewage scheme (1880).

The principal extensions of the town however have been made in consequence of the easy communication with London which was brought by

\* These boundaries were set down in 1327 and 1635, and remained until 1832, when the parliamentary boundary was extended on the east and west sides, and this was adopted under the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 and Municipal Boundaries Com. in 1837. In 1879 the St. Albans City Extension Act further extended the boundaries to points radiating from the Town Hall at a distance of three-quarters of a mile, except for certain lands of Lord Grimthorpe on the north-west of the town. There was a further extension of the boundaries in 1913.

the opening of the Midland Railway. Workers in London appreciated the opportunity of living in a quiet country town full of associations with the past and situated in pleasant surroundings. To meet the demand for houses of a modern type various properties were laid out for building purposes. The first of these was the district known as St. Peter's Park, which was sold in building plots in the 'eighties. In like manner various properties, including Priory Park, so-called from its proximity to the Sopwell estate, Spencer Park, and the district around Sandpit Lane were intersected by roads and became available for houses of a smaller size. The opening up of these districts attracted a large suburban population, which greatly changed the old-world character of the town.

But the facilities of communication brought, besides residential attractions, factories and industrial advantages. Until the end of the nineteenth century St. Albans had shown few signs of development as an industrial town. The attempt to revive the cloth trade in the sixteenth century was not a success, but the straw plait industry brought into this country from France about the reign of Henry VIII., flourished in the eighteenth and still more in the nineteenth century on account probably of the quality of the straw grown in the neighbourhood. As a cottage industry its effect was not beneficial to the condition of the workers. The women earned what was then a large wage of 5s. a day, so that the men depended largely on the women's incomes, which made domestic arrangements unsatisfactory. Schools were established for teaching straw plaiting to children, who were soon able to make as much as 14s. a week. The plait

thus made had a ready sale in St. Albans market, where a special place was set apart for the trade, at first at the Market Cross and later in School Lane, now wrongly called the Cloisters. Towards the latter part of the nineteenth century the trade gradually changed. Straw plait made by cheaper labour abroad superseded home production, and factory work took the place of the cottage industry. Nevertheless St. Albans continues a centre of the straw-hat trade, although fashion and foreign competition have materially affected the output. The manufacture of tallow, cotton wicks, and shoes was also established in the first half of the last century.

The printing trade has appropriately developed in the town, where one of the earliest presses in the country was set up. Two printing presses were established early in the nineteenth century, one of which has grown into a large business employing many hands. But the smallness of the building plots in the town does not allow for the development of factories, consequently the new industrial districts called Fleetville and The Camp have grown up on the east side of the Midland Railway, where printing and colour-printing works, among others, have been started, and here and northward along the Midland Railway there are signs of further developments of factory areas.

The foundation of the Bishopric of St. Albans and the erection of the abbey church into a cathedral in 1877 has had a considerable influence on the town and its inhabitants, and the town, as the seat of a bishopric, was created a city in the same year. As long ago as the sixteenth century Henry VIII. proposed to make St. Albans one of his new bishoprics, but his scheme never matured, and it was not until

over three hundred years later that the great church, so well adapted for the purpose, became the seat of a diocese. The repair of its huge fabric, which until the Municipal Corporations Reform Act of 1835 had been in the hands of the corporation, was beyond the means of a private patron and the parishioners. Much was done by public subscription, but eventually the work of restoration was undertaken by Lord Grimthorpe who, after spending a great sum of money upon it, has left the building in a sound condition, although his want of artistic taste has spoilt many beautiful and interesting features and burdened the church with many incongruities. Nevertheless the cathedral, with its numberless surviving beauties and historical associations, attracts a great number of visitors. The residence of the bishop has made the town a centre of ecclesiastical activity, and the creation of a deanery, with the dean's house on the site of the prior's lodging, and the formation of an honorary chapter, brings clergy from time to time from all parts of the diocese.

With all the vast developments of the nineteenth century, the advancement of education has not been neglected. The increasing scope of the Grammar School has been already referred to. For the advancement of elementary education a "Petty School" was developed at the expense of the Grammar School in 1711, and two years later a Charity School or Blue Coat School was started and subsidized by the corporation; later a Green Coat School for girls was founded by the Dowager Lady Spencer. With the establishment of National Schools in 1834, and of a School Board in 1878, the need for charity schools ceased, and as a complement



to the Grammar School, the Girls' Public Day School was commenced in 1889, and since 1908 has flourished under a local company in new premises.

To carry on and extend the work of education a lending library, under the Public Library Act, and a School of Art were established in 1881, while in 1899 the Hertfordshire County Museum, built by public subscription on a site given by Earl Spencer, was opened. The Hospital, founded in 1861 as a dispensary, at the corner of Holywell Hill and Albert Street, was moved in 1887 to a new building in Verulam Road, which was enlarged in 1899. In 1893 an infectious hospital was presented to the town by Sir John Blundell Maple in memory of his two daughters, and hence called the Sisters Hospital. The town has three recreation grounds given by private donors, besides the common of Bernards Heath, and has a swimming bath and similar institutions.

Thus during the nineteenth century, a period of marvellous advance in science, art and commerce, changes and developments were made at St. Albans beyond any that had been effected in any previous period. The population had increased fourfold, the town had developed into a city and an industrial area. The first few years of the twentieth century saw continued advance in the same direction, but the expansion came to a sudden end with the commencement of the war in 1914. St. Albans, as in the wars of the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, again became the principal northern gate to London and a part of the outer defences of the Metropolis.

On the mobilization of troops a company of the Territorial Battalion of the Hertfordshire Regiment was called up at St. Albans, and was almost

immediately drafted out of the town preparatory to being sent overseas. St. Albans very soon became a training centre for London Territorial Regiments, notably the 19th, 21st, 23rd and 26th Battalions of the County of London Regiment and certain units of the Army Service Corps. After a year's training these troops went abroad and their places were taken by battalions of the Staffordshire, Essex, Leicestershire, West Surrey and other training units.

The appearance of these troops changed the whole aspect of the town. Soldiers were billeted in every available house or other building, every hotel was crowded with officers, and every vacant house was commandeered for headquarters or other military purposes. The streets were filled with khaki-clad men, and the sound of the bugle, the sharp words of military command, the rumbling of the transport lorries and the tramp of soldiers soon became too familiar to attract attention. The whole nation was taking part in the war. Many of the citizens of St. Albans who were too old for active service abroad underwent training in the volunteers or special constabulary. Both bodies did good service, and a large number of the former, during the period of emergency in 1918, went on service to the East Coast, where they proved themselves efficient and well-trained troops.

The headquarters of the Anti-Aircraft Defence for London (Northern Command) were made at St. Albans, and anti-aircraft batteries were established in the neighbourhood of the town. No air raids, however, actually took place on the city, but every precaution against them was made. The streets were without lights, and the hooter on the

roof of the town hall, to give warnings of raids, was brought into use on several occasions, and the electric light was at the same time turned off at the main to bring the city into complete darkness. Some of the earlier Zeppelin raiders flew over the town, and the fall and destruction of the great German airships at Cuffley and Potter's Bar were seen by the inhabitants, and the weird sight of the flaming Zeppelins descending from the skies was acclaimed by shouts.

The aerodrome near London Colney, principally maintained for training American airmen, brought numerous citizens of the United States into St. Albans, where they frequently became the guests of the inhabitants.

The women of St. Albans staffed a Voluntary Aid Detachment Hospital at Bricket House, and gave considerable help in visiting the large War Hospital at Napsbury Asylum.

It was with a feeling of great relief that news of the armistice was brought to St. Albans on 11 November, 1918. The city, like every other place in Great Britain, gave itself up to a spontaneous outburst of rejoicing and thanksgiving. Gradually the town has resumed its normal peace-time appearance. May it be long before it has again to become the military gate on the north of London.

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